FOLK ARTS OF NEW CHINA

A paper-cut from Hopei Province

FOLK ARTS OF NEW CHINA

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The cover and incidental drawings are by Chang Kuang-yu. The chapter end decorations are scissor-cuts and knife-cuts from many parts of China. The wood-cut of the Working People's Palace of Culture in Peking on page 23, is by Ku Yuan.

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Folk Arts of New China

One of the most remarkable phenomena in the art world of China since the liberation has been the renaissance in the folk arts.

It was naturally expected that there would be an upsurge of cultural activity once the revolution had freed the people from the dead hand of the past, but what has surpassed all expectations is the extent and richness of this artistic revival.

The revolution has uncovered a great wealth of artistic treasures and talents among the people and brought them to the appreciative attention of the country and the world at large. This has been a revelation to the intellectuals who have been able to draw on these fresh and inexhaustible springs for the development of their professional arts.

In uncovering these old arts, the new society has given them new vitality. The players at Peking's Bridge of Heaven were dying of malnutrition under the warlords and Kuomintang. Liberation nourished them and their arts. The dance culture of national minorities was banished with them into the hills where they had fled from the Kuomintang press-gangs and tax-gatherers. With the liberation they came back freely to their old homes and danced with joy. The ballad singing of Kwangsi would have continued its slow and pastoral development, singing merely of the dreams of the peasants, had it not been for the revolution that gave it a new dynamic and brought it to participate with telling power in one of the greatest social transformations of all time—the land reform that ended a long and sordid chapter of China's history.

The articles in this volume do not pretend to be an exhaustive treatment of their themes. They do give revealing glimpses into the way these folk arts have emerged into the broad stream of cultural life in New China. They show the transformations that are taking place in the old arts under the impact of the country's new life.

Varied arts are treated—drum playing and dancing, puppet theatre and ballad singing, but there is a common tendency in their development in the new society. It is like the way the general trend of the land down to the basin of a big river leads each tributary, despite its individual windings and turnings, at last into the main stream. This tendency, this

guiding line is the profound directive which Chairman Mao Tse-tung gave to the writers and artists of China during the famous round-table talks on literature and art in Yenan in 1942.

In these talks, Chairman Mao epitomized the attitude of the New Democracy towards art. It is an attitude of the deepest respect for the arts and crafts of the people. It calls for the most loving care for the whole cultural heritage of this ancient land and for its development by the new society. All that is good and useful must be carefully preserved. What is retrograde and harmful must be discarded. The cultural heritage must be fully utilized in the interests of the people's progress.

This attitude is exemplified in a score of ways in the following pages, whether it be the revival of the folk art of the paper-cut or the development of the extraordinarily rich fund of local drama.

This is an attitude that calls in the first place for the mastery of the old arts, for a thorough understanding of their content and form, their technique, and at the same time a profound understanding of the viewpoint of modern China, the viewpoint of Marxism-Leninism, an understanding of the role of art in the China of today advancing through the transitional stage of the People's Democracy towards a socialist society.

But this can be no armchair understanding. Chairman Mao Tse-tung called on the artists to plunge whole-heartedly into the revolutionary struggle, whether this be the armed struggle against the attack of the reactionaries and invading imperialists or on the front of peaceful construction. He called on them to master Marxism-Leninism in practice, and so to serve the workers, the peasants and the people's fighters, the mass of the people in their advance to freedom.

This book does not deal with the whole cultural heritage of China today; that would require a much larger and more ambitious volume. It does deal, however, with some of the most significant and effective of the traditional folk arts of the 475 million people of China. It shows in some typical examples the significance of the developments taking place in those folk arts and how they are being mastered and carried forward under the leadership of the working class, the leading class of Chinese society today.

The working class is introducing to China the most advanced political and social organization; it is introducing the most advanced technique and thought. It is searching out and adapting these ancient folk arts for the further sharpening of its faculties and those of all the people, for the further raising of their understanding and optimistic confidence in the possibility of completing the great task to which the working class has given leadership—the transformation of the most populous nation on

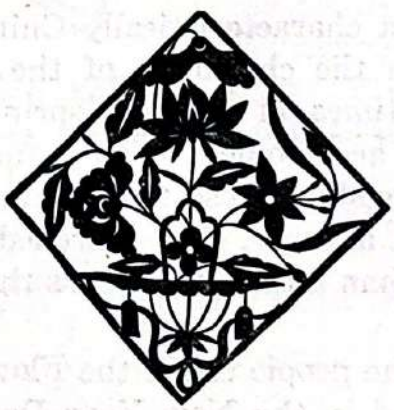
earth, formerly one of the most exploited and downtrodden, into a new, free and prosperous nation.

These pages reflect the spirit with which the Chinese people are marching forward with giant strides to a future that will be more brilliant than the most brilliant days of great epochs of cultural development in the past. It is a future in which the masses will be nourished by a culture that has all the finest traits of the old—deep humanity and peace and burning aspiration for the good—inspired with the vitality and scientific, democratic outlook of the modern working class. It is one of the characteristics of China that she has so rich a fund of the old folk arts to bring to and develop in the new society. This is a circumstance that is full of promise for the rich treasury of the people's art of New China.

The editors extend their thanks and acknowledgments to the magazine *People's China* where the greater part of these articles were published for the first time in its popular column, *Cultural Front*.

Jack Chen

Peking, January 4, 1954.



The Rhythm of the Waist Drum

The sound of the tocsin was the herald of the French Revolution. The rhythmic beat of the waist drum is the symbol of the victory of the Chinese people.

As the people's armies advanced from the country-side to liberate the cities, they took with them the militant, courageous, exciting beats of the waist drums. The drums of the peasants became urbanized. A new national festival art form was born. Today the waist drum, its accompanying cymbals and gay costumes, give characteristic expression to the strength, confidence and joy of the liberated people.

In the first May Day demonstration after the liberation, under brilliant sunshine and amid flying red flags, 2,000 waist drum players and cymbalists headed the parade onto Tien An Men Square. The rhythm of the beats dictated the sharp, determined movements of the players. Their steps and beats were simple, but the very massiveness of numbers, the unison of sound and movement was impressive, like the endless sea waves.

The waist drum is a characteristically Chinese national instrument. It was first described in the chronicles of the 4th century A.D. It is recorded that in ancient times, in the early spring as the peasants worked in the fields, they were accustomed to sing and work to the beat of a large drum. Later the custom arose that during the Spring Festival, as one village went to greet another, they marched to the beat of the small waist drum. For more than a thousand years the waist drum has enjoyed nation-wide popularity.

In southern China, the people call it the Flower Drum. Still as in the ancient days, it is carried in the New Year Day processions. Teams of players make the rounds of the villages. They beat their waist drums. The girls sing softly. The men or old women chant the couplets of good wishes. Or some virtuoso gives a display, beating four drums simultaneously, two with his feet and two by hand; jumping, dancing, turning hand-springs, but always keeping the rhythm.

The Northern drum playing differs little in rhythm but much in its manner of presentation. The well-known composer Lu Chi has closely

studied the history of the Northern waist drum and concludes that it traditionally had two definite styles: the "gentle style" and "heroic style." The former accompanied dances with lively and delicate movements; the latter introduced militant and energetic movements, with exuberant leaps. The teams as a whole, however, expressed the heroism of the labouring people rather than of the warrior. They painted on heavy eye-brows, had red-rosy cheeks and were dressed in bright, colourful costumes. In northern Shansi Province, the team varied from six to ten members and might march in the following order: a leading big drum—a waist drum —a comedian disguised as a woman—a waist drum—a maiden—a village hero—an ugly woman warrior —and Monkey Sun Wu-kung (hero of the famous fabulous Ming dynasty story) followed by a final drum.

The peasants of Shansi, a province noted for the waist drum, say of such dancing that "the woman must sway like a spring willow, the man must leap like a tiger!"

As to the beats for the drum, there is almost no difference between north and south today. The drum is carried on the left side by a shoulder strap and is beaten with two drumsticks. Here are four of the more than 10 distinct beats which can be combined: (A dot shows the left hand; a zero, a pause).

The Marching Beat:

$$\Big|\ \underline{x\dot{x}}\ \underline{x\dot{x}}\ \Big|\ \underline{\underline{x}x\dot{x}}\ \underline{x\dot{x}}\ \Big|\ \underline{\underline{x}x\dot{x}}\ \underline{x\dot{x}}\ \Big|\ \underline{x\dot{x}}\ \underline{x\dot{x}}\ \Big\|$$

The Flower Beats or Beat of Flourishing Life:

$$\underline{\underline{x}x\dot{x}}\ \underline{x\dot{x}}\ \Big|\ \underline{\underline{x}x\dot{x}}\ \underline{x\dot{x}}\ \Big|\ \underline{\underline{x}x\dot{x}}\ \underline{xx}\ \Big|\ x\ 0\ \Big\|$$

The Entrance of the Hero:

$$\frac{\dot{x}}{L}\ x\ \dot{x}\ \Big|\ x\ 0\ \Big|\ \frac{\dot{x}}{L}\ x\ \dot{x}\ \Big|\ x\ 0\ \Big|\ \frac{\dot{x}}{L}\ x\ \dot{x}\ \Big|\ x\ \dot{x}\ \Big|\ x\ \dot{x}\ \Big|\ x\ 0\ \Big\|$$

The Stop Beat:

$$\underline{\underline{x}x\dot{x}}\ \underline{x\dot{x}}\ \Big|\ x\ 0\ \Big\|$$

Although the waist drum has been loved by the working people, it was despised and considered as very "low brow" entertainment by the reactionary ruling classes. After being long ignored by musicians, like so many other good things it was "discovered" by the Lu Hsun Art Academy in Yenan about 1942.

One spring festival, a peasant team came from afar to greet the students and professors with a display of waist drum dancing. The dance surprised them, for most of them came from the cities. Seldom before had they seen such a healthy, strong and courageous dance.

It was at this time that great discussions on literature and art led by Comrade Mao Tse-tung in Yenan were turning the eyes of all cultural workers towards learning from the people. And so the art students travelled from village to village to study every aspect of this folk art of drum playing and dancing. Later they adapted it, eliminating the undertones of superstition and sensuality inherited from the old society. Then they developed it further to express the spirit and ideas of the revolutionary epoch.

As it has spread in its new form from place to place, the art of the waist drum has been further transformed. The small teams, now composed of modern characters, are very popular, but it is now most characteristically played and danced by masses of people, creating an imposing atmosphere of courage, heroism and joy. New rhythmic patterns have been composed. The famous *Waist Drum Dance of Victory* in four movements, first shown at the liberation of Tsinan, aroused tremendous enthusiasm. *The Dance of Liberation* and many others, too, were popularly acclaimed. They were spread by the victories of the People's Liberation Army.

Today in China, large factories, schools, institutions, villages and even many family groups have their own waist drum teams. It has become a new national art. In 1949, it was first introduced to the world-wide public in Budapest at the art contests of the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the International Union of Students. It was awarded a special prize.

The Chinese people march to the beat of the waist drum—the symbol of victory.

Players at the Bridge of Heaven

The Bridge of Heaven—Peking's Tien Chiao, outside the Chien Men Gate—with its booths, stalls and motley amusements, was reserved for the pleasures of the poor. The well-to-do avoided it because of its dirt, beggary, down-and-outs and third-rate goods. The lives of its habitués were a constant struggle to make both ends meet. Yet here was a centre of the people's beloved entertainments, with their own traditions handed down from generation to generation; sturdy growths despite all vicissitudes.

Liberated Peking has given new life to many fine old things. The skilful performers of Tien Chiao—the magicians, tumblers, equilibrists, acrobats, sword dancers and jugglers—are today no longer "forgotten men" of the amusement world. For the first time in their lives they have been given the special attention of the government. After many auditions, 18 of their number joined the troupe of 44 performers who assisted at the celebrations of the Anniversary of the Great October Revolution in Moscow in 1950. Some of them later toured the USSR, the People's Democracies, Austria, Finland, Denmark, and Sweden with a large repertoire of "astounding acts."

Every member of this troupe is truly a people's artist. One of the oldest is Tan Chun-chuan. At 75, he has lost little of his vigour and skill. With seeming effortlessness, he can make a 5-foot steel rod twirl in his hand like a propeller of light. Hao Shu-wang can throw a 30-pound porcelain vase into the air and catch it on the point of its falling either on the crown of his head or the tip of his thumb where it rests as securely

as if it were on a table, or make it spin top-like with a twist of his neck or wrist.

A figure of immense dignity is the 70-year-old Taoist Hu, a master in the manipulation of various ancient weapons such as double-edged swords or lances. When he fences, dazzling and delighting his audiences, he and his weapon move with consummate grace and dexterity as if they were one animated being. Kuan Yu-ho is a weight lifter. All Tien Chiao knows him for his feat of holding a 500-pound block of stone on his hands and feet while four strong men wrestle and tumble on it.

The New People's Acrobatic Troupe has a full complement of magicians. With the smile of the master, one takes the stage with a square of cloth. He shakes it and out of its folds comes an 18-course banquet complete with a huge flower bowl. Twelve red lanterns rise out of the bowl and a pair of doves flutter out of the flowers. Cards and ducks disappear into thin air. Bowls of water and spinning plates on the ends of silver wands seemingly defy the law of gravity.

For full three hours people watch this absorbing display of manual dexterity. It is an exhibition that epitomizes what the world has come to regard as typically Chinese ingenuity, imagination, skill and craftsmanship in entertainment.

The artists of Tien Chiao are mostly from the peasantry. Their arts have grown up among the people and so are loved by them. Yet how bitterly they suffered under the old regime! Tan Chun-chuan started his life as a wandering juggler in 1922. As a youth in the village, at weddings and festivals, he learnt the wielding of the glittering *Kai Lu* which traditionally heads popular parades to "open the way." It was with this skill that he made his living when driven off the land by the oppression of the feudal landlords and warlords.

Hao Shu-wang's vase juggling is part of the astonishing ritual of an ancient brotherhood. It saved his life when, a starving, broken-hearted peasant, deprived of his land, he was forced to leave his native place.

The Taoist Hu was a tenant farmer also driven, like so many millions, from his farm by the inexorable squeeze of imperialist and feudal oppression. In his youth he loved the boxing exercises of old China that are reputed to foster bravery and longevity. To learn the more esoteric exercises, he became a Taoist and thus gained access to the secret masters of the art whose traditions go back to the Tang dynasty and earlier times. His knowledge stood him in good stead, for he first tried to earn his living as a seller of medicines at Tien Chiao, but the Kuomintang soldiery

so often stole his medicaments and the extortions of local gangsters were so heavy that he was driven into bankruptcy. It was the cultivation of his art that made up for all the opprobrium in which wandering performers were held by the rulers of the old Chinese society. Yet, so meagre were his earnings that he often had to go hungry. The poor who appreciated his art had little enough for themselves.

There was a poem which the artists of Tien Chiao used to recite:

Pearls and jewels buried in the ground
Wait for the day when they will shine far and beyond the horizon.

The artists of Tien Chiao today take their reborn art abroad to the furthest horizon for the glory of the Chinese people.

Shadow Theatre

A square of white cloth stretched between four sticks of bamboo, two of them stuck upright in the earth five feet apart; gay embroidered curtains framing the screen and black curtains on either side hiding players and musicians; a large trunk of "props"; a lantern to throw the shadows on the screen..... This is the equipment of the shadow theatre.

The little company sets up its screen in a village. The band makes a mighty din. Crashing cymbals, pounding drum, sweet flute and violin call the peasants to the shadow drama. Children squat in front on earthen "stalls"; oldsters bring their wooden benches. Young people perch on nearby trees, a leafy "gallery." Night falls. The bright lantern throws the dancing shadows on the screen. They seem, in their stylized attitudes, as real as human figures. They strut and rant, cry, seem to heave their shoulders as they sob or catch their breath in anger. They sing, dance and act the famous folk tales and dramas amid appropriate scenery and "effects." They do amazing acrobatics and "transformation" scenes. A pig, Pigsy in the *Pilgrimage to the West,* turns into a camel. Fairy princesses travel through the air on magic clouds. There is no marvel that the shadow theatre cannot simulate.

The shadow theatre has a thousand years of history behind it. The figures are skilfully cut with scissors or knife out of donkey-skin parchment. Embroideries and hair, the leaves of trees and ferns are indicated by delicately cut tracery. The bodies are supported on thin fillets of bamboo held in the operator's hand. The movable hands and limbs are manipulated by thin threads. The parchment is tinted with rich colours which have a rare translucence when thrown on the screen.

The plays of the shadow theatre include most of the fairy and folk tales familiar to the people of all China. *The Tale of the White Snake* is the story of a fairy white snake transformed into a beautiful girl. She falls in love with and marries a young man and struggles hard against a bigoted recluse to retain the love of her husband. Worsted in the struggle, she is imprisoned under a pagoda. Many years later, her true love triumphs, the pagoda is destroyed, and she is freed. This play is one of the favourites of the shadow theatre.

Ever popular too are the many episodes of the *Pilgrimage to the West*, the adventures of the famous Monkey Sun Wu-kung, and the monk Tripitaka, who went to fetch the Buddhist scriptures from India. The peasants have heard these tales countless times but there has yet to be a shadow theatre performance that ends with less audience than it starts with.

Where the shadow theatre originated is no longer known. But as time went on, it spread through the whole country. On its travels it took on local colour and now differs in various areas. But it can be divided roughly into two main schools, those of northern and southern China.

The Southern school, especially popular in Fukien Province, has a history that can be traced back to the Sung dynasty (A.D. 960-1279). At that time its plays were mostly based on religious stories derived from Buddhism. Later it adapted folk tales more familiar to its audiences. Its figures are larger than those of the Northern school and its music more soft, like the flowing waters of the beautiful rivers of South China.

The smaller figures of the Northern shadow theatre, about a foot high, are more lively and their audiences delight in stories of virile acrobatic heroes of the people. Its music is more robust than that of the Southern school.

During the early 19th century, the Northern school enjoyed great popularity in old Peking. At that time (as is the case today) about eight people formed a company. One or two manipulated the dolls, as many as eight of which might appear in one scene. Two others sang and declaimed, the rest provided the music on drums and cymbals, *erh hu* (Chinese violin) and flute. They gave performances in tea houses or in the nearby villages, at the bazaars at Hsi Tan or at the Bridge of Heaven —the amusement centre of the working people of Peking. Only a few copper coins were charged for a whole evening's entertainment. The capital once had more than 30 shadow theatres attracting thousands of people every evening.

As the imperialist invaders, the warlord and Kuomintang regimes threw the country into increasing chaos and misery, the shadow theatre almost disappeared. Finally, Lu Ching-ta's company was the only one left. Lu Ching-ta recalls the old days: "Our audiences grew smaller and smaller. The working folk were so poor they couldn't even pay the small fee for the shadow show. The policemen however came again and again to squeeze us for 'taxes.'" Then some gangsters came and smashed up the whole thing because it could pay them no more "protection money.' Not even a single shadow theatre could exist in Kuomintang Peking. Lu

became a pedicab driver and the rest of his company returned to their villages and farms. The shadow theatre declined in other areas as well.

Liberation brought new life to the arts of the people. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs of the Central People's Government recognizes the shadow theatre as one of the best loved folk arts particularly among the peasants. It takes its forms of people and things from the scissor-cuts of the peasant women; its colours from the gaily coloured clay toys of the country fair; its decorative motifs from the treasure house of folk designs. It has synthesized these art elements with action, poetry, song and music. The Theatre Section of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs is now collecting all available materials to revive and develop this art form. Much information has already been received from the many provinces, particularly in the Northeast, in which the shadow theatre is enjoying a vigorous revival.

It is reborn in Peking. One rainy evening after liberation, three unexpected visitors came to Lu Ching-ta's house. They were two professors of the Central Institute of Fine Arts, and a writer from the Peking Federation of Writers and Artists. They looked with admiration at Lu's shadow figures and immediately invited him to work at the Central Institute of Fine Arts as a people's artist. Lu was overjoyed by this timely visit. In a few days he was in a studio at the Institute re-creating his shadow figures among an eager group of professors and students. He in turn has received valuable advice from them particularly in regard to characters of modern life. He gathered his company together again, and soon they had started a run in a small theatre at the Tung An Bazaar on one of Peking's busiest streets. In a short while they were joined by two other shadow theatres on tour from the Northeast.

Lu has a new critical attitude towards his work now. He has carefully discarded the retrograde tendencies in his old plays and has tried out some new sketches on modern themes: the great campaign for better health and cleanliness, the land reform. . . .

Recently Professor Chang Jen-hsia of the Central Institute of Fine Arts, a lover of folk tales, wrote a special shadow play for Lu's new company—*The Dragon Princess and the Wooden Flute.* It is a fairy tale of how a poor peasant, through his labour and simple folk music, wins the love of a dragon princess. Lu and his colleagues were deeply moved not only by this story, but by the fact that for the first time in history a distinguished scholar of China has written a play for their truly popular art.

The Egg Books

They are called "egg books" because they are as cheap as eggs, and you'll find them in almost every peasant household. In the old days at festivals and fairs, booksellers did a brisk trade in these slim booklets with their simple language and familiar layout—an old-style actor's photograph on the cover and inside, a wonderland—for the price of an egg. Peasants loved these old familiar tales in the "egg books." Here were the heroes of *All Men Are Brothers; The Brave Fisherman and His Daughter* fighting their oppressors; the maid whose tears for her beloved caused the Great Wall itself to crumble—tales of fairies and ghosts, thrillers, sentimental ballads; folk tales retaining their popular strength and integrity; others, distorted into propaganda for the worship of the gods and rulers of the past.

But in 1950 when the peasants looked to buy the latest batch of booklets, they found them cheap as before—but how different! There were new covers with vivid drawings of the new people of today. The tales inside were new too, but as absorbing as the old. The old time heroes were still there—but with a difference, appearing now in their true roles as the heroes of the people. But there were also tales of the heroes of today—labour heroes, volunteers battling the U.S. invaders in Korea, modern inventors; stories of adventures in catching Kuomintang spies, tales of love and marriage in the new, emancipated society. Tales of the marvels created by the people. And the price—the same—the modern egg book! The news spread. Hundreds of thousands of the new egg books have been sold.

Outside of the Yung Ting Gate (The Gate of Eternal Peace) of Peking, the Pao Wen Tang is a one-roomed bookstore which holds the leading place among the fifty-odd egg-book publishing houses in Peking. The store itself seems from the inside to be made of books, lined from floor to ceiling with its paper products. More than ten million copies of these little books have been sold in a single year.

Publisher Liu Yu-chen's great-great-grandfather was a poor Hopei peasant. On a trip to Shantung he made friends with a carpenter who knew how to make wood-cuts and also how to print. Old Liu recalled

his old folk tales. A journeyman writer took them down. The carpenter set them up in type and they started to sell their little printed story books. Told in the people's everyday speech, the vernacular *pai hua,* with just a touch of literary style from the *wen yen,* the scholars' language, their tales took the peasants' fancy. They named their little work room Pao Wen Tang—the Hall of Literary Treasures. That was more than a century ago. Their books spread through North China's villages. From being a novelty, they became an institution.

Liu's son and grandson carried on his work. They moved with the times. They bought an automatic printing press, increased editions, lowered costs. But from year to year the contents of these books more or less remained the same. The healthy democratic outlook and deep, real sentiment in most of the stories was overlaid to a greater or lesser degree by the servile ideas of an outworn feudal and semi-colonial outlook. Many of these books acted like a drug on the minds of their readers.

Today Pao Wen Tang is transformed. Leading newspapers now call it a bookstore for the people. Two years ago, soon after liberation, three men came to buy books at the store and got into conversation with publisher Liu. He was surprised that they knew so much not only about his books but about his readers. They were the novelist Chao Shu-li, the short story writer Miao Pei-shih and the poet Wang Ya-ping. They invited him to join the Peking Research Society for Popular Creative Work. There, both he and other publishers had many discussions with writers interested in the problems of how to produce story books that really served the people. Only then did he gradually realize that his books had unwittingly done harm to the peasants.

When Pao Wen Tang undertook to reform its books, such famous writers as Lao Sheh, who wrote the novel *Rickshaw Boy,* and Chao Shu-li, also famous for his short stories, immediately offered twenty stories. Liu was still a bit sceptical. Would the peasants like these new tales? The answer was quickly given. More than nine hundred thousand copies were sold within a few months and the peasants asked for more. All the other Peking egg-book publishing houses followed this lead.

In one year and a half Pao Wen Tang alone has published more than one hundred new stories. Old tales have been re-told; new ones created. Progressive writers have taken famous old folk tales whose meanings have been distorted and restored their original beauties. We still have the tale of Wu Sung, the famous folk hero, who once met a tiger on a mountain. After a furious and legendary fight, he kills the beast. But though the tale is old, the moral is new. The story illustrates Chairman Mao Tse-tung's warning: aggressive imperialism is like a ravening tiger which we must destroy or it will destroy us. Among the new tales, the

Ten Sisters Who Boast About Their Husbands is one of the most popular. Ten sisters have married husbands of different professions. First, each of them boasts that her husband is the most capable, but then they all realize that their husbands' trades are all interlinked, that only through co-operation can their husbands' talents really contribute to the people's good and all can lead a happier life.

The demand for the egg books is now greater than ever before, both because of their new content and because of the rapid spread of literacy in the liberated country-side. The post office now takes subscriptions for them in any village. Demand outstrips supply.

The People Dance

When, in brilliant sunshine, 6,000 dancers from every region of China danced their colourful way across Tien An Men Square on China's 1950 National Day, it seemed to symbolize the unity that has been realized among the artists of the many nationalities of People's China.

Later, the dancers from the national minorities gave more than 40 performances in Peking. Three thousand writers, artists and workers in many cultural spheres saw this gala festival at the Temple of Agriculture. Everyone who could, flocked to the concerts, one of the outstanding artistic events of the year.

This gathering of dancers from the Southwest, Sinkiang in the Northwest, Inner Mongolia and the Koreans of Northeast China, gave one an exhilarating consciousness of the vastness and diversity of China and the enormous reservoir of cultural riches and talent that the people's revolution has unsealed.

China's Southwest peoples showed themselves here as splendid dancers. Their art has all the immediacy of folk culture. Dancing for them is as natural an activity as working or eating. Among the Miaos of Kweichow, the *Lu Ti* (a reed-pipe made in many sizes, some with a pipe 5-feet long) is played by two-thirds of the male population who invariably dance as they play. It has a peculiarly plaintive timbre as of birds in the twilight, and there is also something bird-like in the impression the dancers create as they hold it. Their steps are symbolic and evocative rather than pantomimic—"Roosters Fighting," "The Dragon Moves," the "Spring Strut." Their dances deal with basic social themes: the *Dance of the Four Seasons*, the *Dance of Friendship*—depicting the reunion of old friends, the *Moon Dance*—a dance of love-making famous among the Ahsi people who not infrequently dance the whole night through. In the *Dance of the Four Directions* a drum summons the dancers. Their movements symbolize the wind that blows them together, then again they recall the darting movements of fish who come together fleetingly in a pool and disperse and gather again in constant motion.

These four groups of dancers in Peking represented 43 nationalities. The Southwest troupe alone included folk dancers from 13 peoples in

Miao youth playing on the "Lu Sheng"

Kweichow, Yunnan and Sikang.

The Sinkiang troupe brought the characteristic movements and music of the Central Asian peoples: Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Uighurs, Tatars; the vivacious, clipped rhythms done to the beat of the *Yuen Ku*, the hand drum, the gracious running steps of the women dancers with gorgeously coloured billowing skirts, and particularly expressive hand movements. They sang the songs of the epic chivalry of the steppes—the *Annaurhan,* the tragic tale of a famous beauty, for instance; but here too is the song of a peasant denouncing the ravages of war, calling for peace and happiness. Many of their dances depict their field and house work: cultivating the soil, reeling or sewing cotton or silk.

The troupes from Inner Mongolia and the Koreans of Northeast China have developed their folk dances to make them more suitable for theatrical performance. These are professional groups of selected folk dancers. The Mongolian group, formed in 1946, helped the campaigns of the People's Liberation Army and has developed out of their folk dances forms well able to express modern ideas. Their sword dance uses traditional movements yet personifies the strength, vitality and determination of the people's fighters of today. In his *Wild Goose* dance, the young dancer Chia Zo-kuang, who performed for the World Youth Festival in Prague, takes the theme of the migration of the birds, fighting through storms to the haven and warmth of sunny lands, to symbolize the struggle of the people for liberation. For all its newness of form, the spirit of this dance immediately communicated itself to a great audience at the People's Open-Air Theatre in Chungshan Park in Peking and they roundly applauded this bold and inventive artist.

The Yenpien Border Region Troupe, the largest of those of Korean nationality in the Northeast, also grew out of the war of liberation and today shows a high standard of professional achievement. It has 90 artists and its own orchestra of modern and folk instruments. Their range of theme and treatment is still wider than that of the other troupes: pastoral dance mimes scuh as *Washing* or *Pounding Rice;* rousing martial

movements of ancient heroes with clashing swords; and songs of the birth of New China. This modern note in the songs was characteristic of all the troupes, in fact. All sang songs of praise of the Communist Party and the leadership of Chairman Mao Tse-tung, whose national policy has made this unique festival possible.

The establishment of the Central People's Government has brought about an entirely new relation between the cultures of the various national minorities and that of the Han people. Each people is encouraged to develop its own national arts. Any expression of the old supercilious attitude to the culture of the minorities is today greeted with scathing condemnation. The national minorities no longer bring their arts to the capital as something "exotic." The people's arts have come into their own. Now there is an eager quest for knowledge of the arts of the national minorities to enrich the common fund of Chinese culture. There is the utmost eagerness to encourage the art of the peoples, to create a diversified culture, national in form but inspired by the common ideals of the New Democracy.

Blind Minstrels of the People

The blind minstrels are singing new ballads in the tea houses of Peking.

In the cool of late afternoon, while the customers sip their cups of hot green tea, the story-tellers, lightly tapping their way with their slim bamboo canes, come among them, and to the music of the *erh hu* or beat of castanets relate the *Tale of the Young Couple Working in the Fields,* a tale of modern love, or the *Story of the Four Guns,* four highly articulate firing pieces whose autobiographies cover the most exciting adventures in the revolutionary wars. Then they have stories of Comrade Mao Tse-tung and Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh, of the people's volunteers in Korea, of production competitions. . . .

They tell comic tales of old-fashioned mothers-in-law. . . .

If you coax them, they will still tell you the old familiar fables of fairies, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* or the 2,000 year old *Tales of the Eastern Chou Dynasty.* But they are discriminating now in their choice of tales from feudal China. They have already lost their faith in the superstitions of ghosts and evil spirits, of such tales as *Lady into Fox.*

Customers like to hear of something new, yet are curious. Where did they get these new ballads from?

"Where? Please see our badge! We are students of the Blind Artists' Training School."

The idea was proposed in 1950 to the People's Government by Professor Lo Chang-pei, the famous linguist, and the well-known novelist Lao Sheh. It was enthusiastically supported by the Department of Literature and Art of the Peking Municipal People's Government. In December the classes for 62 blind street wanderers were established in an old temple.

Like Homer, the immortal Greek, such minstrels used to wander through the city streets and country places of China. They were already a familiar part of the social life of the country before the Sung dynasty in A.D. 960. They told the historic romances of feudal times and although the stories are well known, children and grown-ups have always loved their musical tones and their many ways of telling.

Each ballad has many melodies to accompany it. In Peking alone more than 400 melodies are in current use.

These minstrel singers lived a life of ironic tragedy. Themselves placed at the bottom of the social scale by feudal ideas, sometimes they blindly sang poetic praises composed by the old ruling class to feudal times and ways of life. Thus unconsciously they helped to perpetuate their own slavery. But then, too, they told the fine folk ballads of the heroes who fought for the rights and happiness of the people. Their fairy tales at their best expressed the will of the people to win a happy future.

During the past three decades the blind musicians fell on even harder times. As they put it: "The rich who were able to come to the tea houses would not pay us. The poor couldn't even afford to come!" Many had to give up their art and became fortune-tellers.

When liberation came, the blind singers wondered what the future held in store for them. Very soon they found that life was changing fast. They shared in the growing prosperity of the new Peking. Two blind minstrels, Wang Shao-chin and Chu Shao-pin were invited to participate in the National Conference of Writers and Artists. This was a surprise to the blind fraternity. They had never thought that a blind man could be treated as an equal with those who could see or that such wanderers of the street as they could be recognized as artists of the people.

The minstrels eagerly attended the new school established for them. In the morning from 9 to 11 the famous professional theatrical ballad singers Tsao Pao-lu and Lien Ko-ju taught them new ballads and melodies. In the evening from 7 to 9 they came again for political discussions and lectures. During their three months of training, they received not only all living expenses from the Government but a new black cotton suit for the Spring Festival.

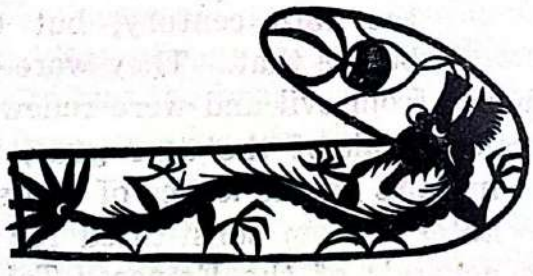
At the end of February, 1951, the first class graduated. They had learnt 30 new ballads and melodies. They were artists of New China. They found themselves on the threshold of a new life. Wang Shao-chin was invited to work at the Research Institute for Ancient Music of the East China Branch of the Central Conservatory of Music, Chiang Lan-tien joined a troupe of entertainers of the People's Liberation Army. Two others are attached as teachers and research aides to the Peking People's Dramatic Academy. Many others are broadcasting their ballads regularly over Radio Peking. Several have contributed their own compositions to the press. They are always in big demand for concerts and entertainments at people's clubs. Group by group the rest of Peking's 100 blind minstrels were retrained.

A resonant new voice sang over Radio Peking. Tens of thousands on the streets, in tea houses, parks, clubs and private homes pricked up

their ears at its optimistic tones, smiled at its witticisms. It was Fan Shih-chung, the blind minstrel telling his own stories and ballads of the people's victories over the U.S. aggressors. And he still makes his popular rounds of the tea houses reciting his new political monologues and comic educational stories.

Fan was once an unfortunate fortune-teller. Son of a poor peasant, he lost his sight as a child. When his parents became utterly impoverished he was apprenticed to a minstrel. Blind as he was, he had to do the household chores, and was cruelly ill-treated. Finally he ran away. Wandering in the city he listened to the story-tellers and then one day decided to try his hand at it himself. Thus he supported himself, but as times became worse he took up fortune-telling. Fan told people that he believed in destiny, but he says today with a mischievous grin: "I knew at least better than to believe that myself! Yet I still counted it as lucky if a man was rich, with enough to eat and nothing to do. Now after this three months' training, I would say that he is lucky who can work to serve the people."

It is no wonder the minstrels like to sing songs of joy these days. When the customers encouragingly tell them: "Now you blind have opened eyes!" The answer comes seriously: "Our eyes are blind, but not our hearts!"



New Year Pictures

The Lunar New Year Festival in China begins on the 23rd of the twelfth moon and lasts by tradition till the 19th of the first moon in the New Year—more than three weeks. Officially it is celebrated in grand style for three days of holidays, the longest public holiday in New China's calendar. Parties, dances, family reunions, public festivities of all kinds fill the days and nights. The houses of every family, every work place and community centre are specially decorated. At the entrances hang lanterns of all shapes and sizes, festoons of gaily coloured paper and the indispensable *nien hua*—the New Year pictures.

The *nien hua* originated in deep antiquity. The earliest one still in existence dates from the 13th century, but they were used long before that. They were pictures or icons supposed to guard the house from evil and were renewed each New Year.

The ancient classics speak of the door gods, the *men shen*, whose portraits were pasted in pairs on the leaves of doors to prevent evil from entering the house. Later custom substituted for these amiable deities the portraits of two generals of the Emperor Tai Tsung's reign (A.D. 627-649) of the Tang dynasty. When Tai Tsung, so the story goes, fell sick and couldn't sleep for fear of ghosts, two of his generals volunteered to stand guard at his door. Thus reassured, the Emperor slept calmly. But fearing that the long night vigils might be too much for his generals he gave them leave and ordered their portraits to be painted on the door instead. This proved just as good for his sleep. Later the populace in general began replacing the ancient *men shen* with the portraits of the two loyal generals. This incident (perhaps apocryphal) was usually taken as the origin of the *nien hua*. In the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), more popular forms of *nien hua* began to appear.... They included por-

traits of other famous and popular heroes, as well as beautiful goddesses and symbolic objects. Gradually they took on a more general character. In the Manchu dynasty (1644-1911) they began to include landscapes and illustrations from folk tales and drama. By the time the dynasty fell, the *nien hua* began to be printed by lithography and other modern means of reproduction. With the new possibilities of form provided by the new advances in printing techniques, and the growing number of city dwellers with new tastes who bought them—the style of the *nien hua* began to change.

The *nien hua* had always reflected the people's desires for happiness and for the good things of life of which they were deprived in actual life by an unjust and oppressive social system. And so it remained, under the warlord and Kuomintang regimes. Among the pictures that then came to be popular was that of a fat baby and a carp—signifying wealth and abundance; the regatta of dragon boats—symbolizing festival gaiety; the marriage of mice—symbolizing good humour, and of course the ever-popular portraits of the heroes of the past—an expression of the people's respect for those who fought for justice. These printed *nien hua* spreading from the big industrial cities competed with the traditional *nien hua*, many with a history of decades, printed from wood-blocks in bright colours: vermilion, emerald green, blues and yellows contrasted with rich, deep black. But always it was considered essential by the great mass of peasants to buy the images of the door gods, and especially of the kitchen god. These were kept in their special places in the homes all the year round only to be renewed at the next New Year.

The *nien hua* exerted a deep influence on the minds of the people. They meant hopes eternally held but always frustrated. They meant a superstitious dependence on "the powers that be" to guard over the fate of the people.

Liberation brought a new life to this ancient art. From distant Yenan, in the immensity of the loess ravines of Northwest China, the heart of the areas liberated from the Kuomintang dictatorship and the Japanese invaders, the organization and ideas of the New Democracy and its culture spread through China. After Chairman Mao Tse-tung's Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art in 1942, the revolutionary artists saw more clearly what it meant to serve the workers, peasants and the people's fighters. They saw that they must learn from the

masses and use creative media that are understandable to them. At the same time the masses of the people in the liberated areas were putting forward a social demand for new *nien hua* that would express their ideals and the realities of their new-democratic life. The revolutionary artists in Yenan created new "door gods"—the people's fighters, the model workers and peasants, that quickly replaced the old door gods and imperial generals as guardians of the people's homes. The peasants eagerly bought and decorated their homes with *nien hua* depicting their new life.

With the victory of the liberation throughout China, the new *nien hua* have quickly established themselves in the homes of the people throughout the land. The people's outlook has changed. Superstitious beliefs in the aid of supernatural forces to look after their interests are disappearing. They have a new confidence in themselves, a confidence born of victory. The growth of production, industry, trade, social security, education . . . all confirm the development of their new realistic, scientific and democratic outlook on life engendered under the leadership of the working class. All this demands artistic expression in the *nien hua* as in all the other arts of the people.

The new *nien hua* in the early days of the liberation struggle were executed in the old well-loved forms of folk art such as scissor and knife-cuts and brightly coloured wood-cuts. But some were printed by lithography, others by an oil printing method invented in the old liberated areas which enabled as many as seven colours to be used.

The new *nien hua*, which reflect the best artistic traditions of the people, portray the many-sided life of the people, their triumphant advance, their victories in battle, their bumper crops, the heroes and heroines of the battlefield as well as the labour front, and the new things and events that characterize the construction of China's new-democratic society as well as the magnificent perspectives opened ahead. Recent *nien hua* have shown the great national demonstrations on Tien An Men Square; scenes at the Working People's Palace of Culture in Peking; Soviet specialists helping work in factories and farms; new agricultural machines, tractors, combines on the fields of China; the Chinese People's Volunteers in Korea. . . .

During the period 1945-1949, under the extremely difficult conditions during the War of Liberation in the Northwest, Northeast, North and East China, as many as 400 different *nien hua* were published. Year by year, the new *nien hua* have more and more superseded the old. In 1950 over 400 different titles were published in 26 centres. In 1952 the number of copies printed was five times that of 1950. For the New Year of 1953 no less than 40 million New Year pictures were bought to decorate the houses of the people.

Every year the Ministry of Cultural Affairs offers prizes for the best *nien hua*. *Chao Kuei-lan at a Reception for Heroes* by Lin Kang was a prize-winner in 1952. It portrays one of the most popular of New China's heroines as she meets Chairman Mao Tse-tung. All the country knows how she risked her life to save her colleagues and factory from a threatened explosion and suffered serious injury to her hand. Another prize-winner was *Safeguard Peace* by Teng Shu, a picture of peasants signing the peace appeal. These works are characteristic of the skill, the quality of realism and mature political outlook and knowledge of the *nien hua* painters of today. At its best, their art is truly of the people and for the people.

Hidden Treasures of Folk Art

The first All-China Folk Music and Dance Festival sponsored by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs was an unprecedented occasion in the development of the dramatic arts of China. From April 1-8, 1953, in matinée and evening performances, more than three hundred folk artists, gathered in Peking from all parts of the country, gave a review of their attainments. They represented ten nationalities, including peasant mimes and dancers from Hopei and Hunan, musicians from the grasslands of Inner Mongolia, dancers from Sinkiang Province, Korean peasant dancers from Northeast China, famous mountaineer singers from the highlands of the Southwest and young dancers from tropical Hainan Island.

In these memorable days the participants at the Festival watched each other's performances together with the poets, musicians, dancers, singers and other artists in the audience. Then came many meetings of discussions and public performances. The Festival revealed long-hidden gems of folk art from a treasury of art which, as it is systematically studied and developed, will be an inexhaustible source of inspiration to all artists.

The Festival had been a considerable time in preparation.

Early this year, under the direction of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, two hundred experienced musicians and dancers—including Tai Ai-lien, the dancer, and the musicians Li Ling and Li Huan-chih—went in groups to various parts of the country to study the folk arts. For over two months they travelled in twenty-six provinces and the two autonomous regions of Inner Mongolia and Yenpien in the Northeast. Sometimes by ox-cart or horseback, they visited many villages in the remotest parts of the country. They saw and heard well-known forms of folk art like the *yangko* dances of the Shansi peasants or the Yangtse River boatmen's songs, they also found many types of folk art which are an intimate part of the life of the people but had previously been completely unknown to outsiders. In a small village in Kiangsi Province, one group saw peasants performing an ancient dance called *Tiao No*. It was originally a ritual dance for exorcizing evil spirits and is known to have been danced as early as the Chou dynasty more than three thousand years ago.

In the early part of March this year, preliminary folk art festivals were sponsored by local cultural organizations in more than twenty provinces and municipalities. Some five hundred artists participated in the performances in Liaotung Province alone. At these festivals long-forgotten songs and dances were revived. In Peking, monks of nine Buddhist temples gave performances of *fu chu*, Buddhist songs, a legacy from the Tang (A.D. 618-907) and Sung (A.D. 960-1279) dynasties hitherto preserved exclusively in these monasteries.

More than one hundred musical and dance numbers were selected from these regional festivals for performance at the national festival in the capital. All were well-chosen, vital and popular among the masses; they had the typical traits of our folk arts which have been developed and enriched through the ages.

A characteristic of Chinese folk art is its expression of the people's indomitable resistance to oppression. The *Lion Dance*, an ever-popular favourite throughout the country, as performed by artists from Hunan Province, depicts the fight of a brave man with a lion. Calm, resolute and agile, the man finally defeats the lion which symbolizes brute force.

Artists from Kwangtung Province performed another dance on this theme: *The Dance of Heroes* which is the story of the folk heroes of the famous novel *Water Margin* (*All Men Are Brothers*) who waged an uncompromising fight against the tyrants of their time. The *Sword Dance* by Koreans from Northeast China similarly expresses the peasants' wrath and militant spirit in their struggle against the oppressors.

Despite the cruelties of tyrannical rulers, the masses of the people never lost confidence in the ultimate victory of their struggle for a happy life. Many folk songs, musical compositions and dances express this optimism of the people. One of the most striking is the Orchestra of Eight Musical Instruments (the Chinese reed organ, flute, drums and gongs), a firm favourite with the peasants of Shansi Province. Its performance of the *March of Victory* struck a chord in the hearts of the audience from the very start by its lively rhythm, its clear and sonorous melody and tremendous force. It is a picture of the triumphant return of the people's troops, with banners flying, horses neighing and people cheering. The marching troops seem to draw nearer and nearer like a wave. The exultation of the people rises to a climax, with the drums and gongs sounding fantastically loud. In a variation of the *Lion Dance*, this time from Hopei Province, four men masquerade as two lions playing with a man who holds a gaily coloured ball—a symbol of happiness and prosperity.

Another distinctive trait of our folk art is its realistic reflection of the people's life, in all its rich and colourful activities.

"Catching the Butterfly," a dance from Northeast China

Han Chi-hsiang, a blind musician whose life had been saved by the liberation and whose art had been given a new vitality, was one of several who sang praises of the life of the people in the People's China. His ballads are known not only throughout his native Shensi Province, which he has widely wandered over as a travelling minstrel, but also throughout the country. Many ballad singers perform the best known of his scores of new compositions.

Catching the Butterfly from Northeast China and *Kite-Flying* from Hunan Province are dances of courtship. The former expresses the mood of a young man catching a butterfly, the symbol of love, in a garden of spring blossoms. The latter portrays a young woman flying a kite in the garden while waiting for her sweetheart. This was danced with incredible virtuosity by a sixty-one-year-old artist, Liao Chun-shan, who evoked with rare insight the feelings of a girl in her first love. Only two people in the whole of China know the steps of this dance. Many years ago the only man who knew it taught it to these two, Liao Chun-shan and a woman partner. The troubled times separated them. It was only when two investigation teams working in Hunan and Kiangsi Provinces separately discovered the two that once again the dance was brought together as a whole.

The people love the world of nature: the morning clouds, the setting sun, the breeze, snow flakes, the mountains and rivers, the roaring sea; all aspects of nature stir their feelings and imagination. The *Hundred Birds Paying Tribute to the Phoenix,* a musical composition of Hupeh and Shantung Provinces for wind instruments, imitates the singing of birds and expresses the joy and gaiety of nature in festive mood.

Many work songs and dances express the Chinese people's love of work. *Tea-pickers* describes the life of China's famous tea gardens. Full of the vigour of youth it expresses the love of the young girls for their free labour today. *Casting the Fishnet,* a piece for drums, gongs, cymbals, flutes and trumpets from Chaochow, Kwangtung Province, portrays the labour of the fishermen in musical form. The first drummer, Chiu Han-shang, is a fisherman himself who has played this instrument for fifty

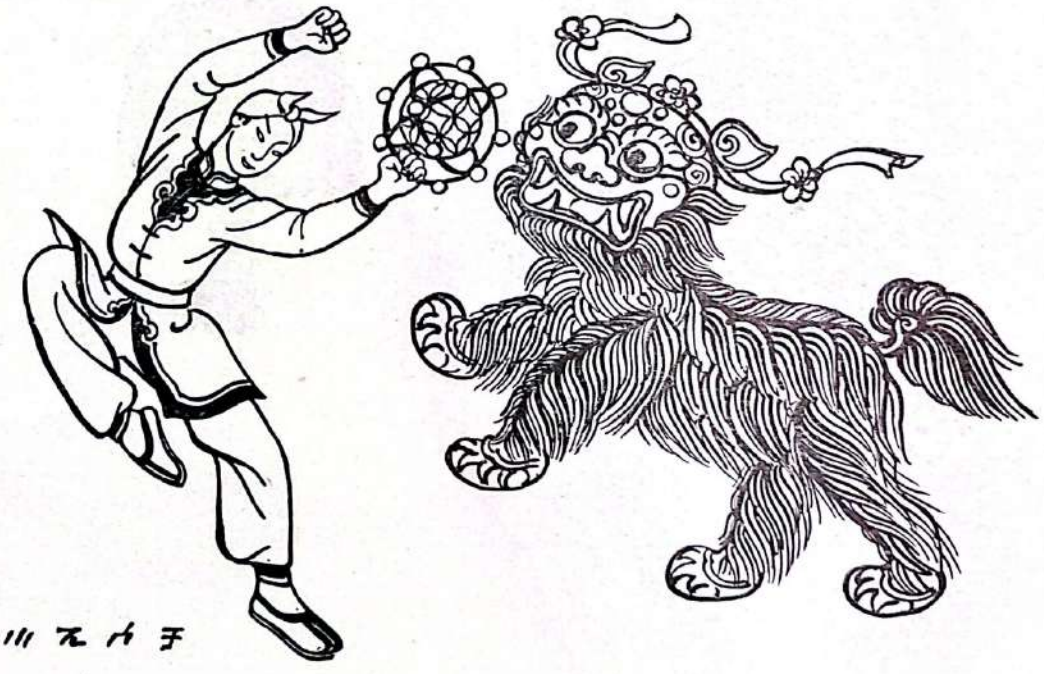
years having first learnt the art from a carpenter friend in his village. The *Dagour* dance of Inner Mongolia depicts the life of hunters. The sweet notes of the two-stringed *matouchin* which accompany it, convey the sense of limitless space of the steppes.

Ever since 1942, when Chairman Mao Tse-tung gave his famous Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art, the People's Government and progressive artists have paid still greater attention to the study and development of folk art. During the early days of the war against Japanese aggression and the liberation war, it was only possible to take certain art forms, such as the *yangko* or waist drum, and develop them intensively to serve the life and death struggle of the people that was then being waged. In the present period of peaceful construction, it has become possible to undertake a planned and systematic, nation-wide study of the folk arts, one of the richest veins of our cultural heritage, and give them the most favourable opportunities for mutual enrichment and development.

In the old society folk artists were discriminated against. These artists of the people were regarded by the rulers with contempt. Children of certain folk musicians were, for instance, forbidden by law to serve as government officials or to engage in trade. Many folk artists were reduced to beggary and led a vagrant life. Their emancipation and the emancipation of their art were possible only in the new society.

Folk artists of the peasantry, the overwhelming majority, received adequate landholdings like other peasants in the land reform. Folk artists in urban areas receive the care given to all artists by the People's Government.

During the Peking festival, a research group of more than eighty experts on music and the dance was organized by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs to study the various folk arts shown, to help their practitioners eliminate elements of superstition and backwardness from their art, and to strengthen its positive elements. They also heard de-



The Lion Dance from Hopei

tailed reports on the findings of the field investigation groups about performances which were not presented at the Festival but were recorded. At the same time, the folk artists of various nationalities met and exchanged experiences. Many of these discussions were participated in by Peking's professional artists who themselves staged special performances for the folk artists who were guests of the capital.

The Festival ended officially on April 14. But this was only a beginning of a new stage in the development of the folk music and dance arts of New China. Ma Ko, the well-known composer, in an article in the *People's Daily* expressed something which the Festival served to bring home again most vividly to Chinese artists—that professional artists must learn from the folk arts: "Without the professional musician, the people's music could not be developed to the highest level. But if the professionals should divorce their art from the music of the people, they would be helpless."

Before he came to Peking, the blind minstrel Han Chi-hsiang, as he frankly admitted, was somewhat complacent about his technique on the *san hsien* (a Chinese three-stringed musical instrument). But, he added, after the Festival and the discussions, he realized that he had still a lot to learn. These are only two typical results of the Festival.

The treasury of folk art has been opened. The gems to be found there will be brought forth and placed in a richer setting for the edification of the people and the further advance of the professional arts.

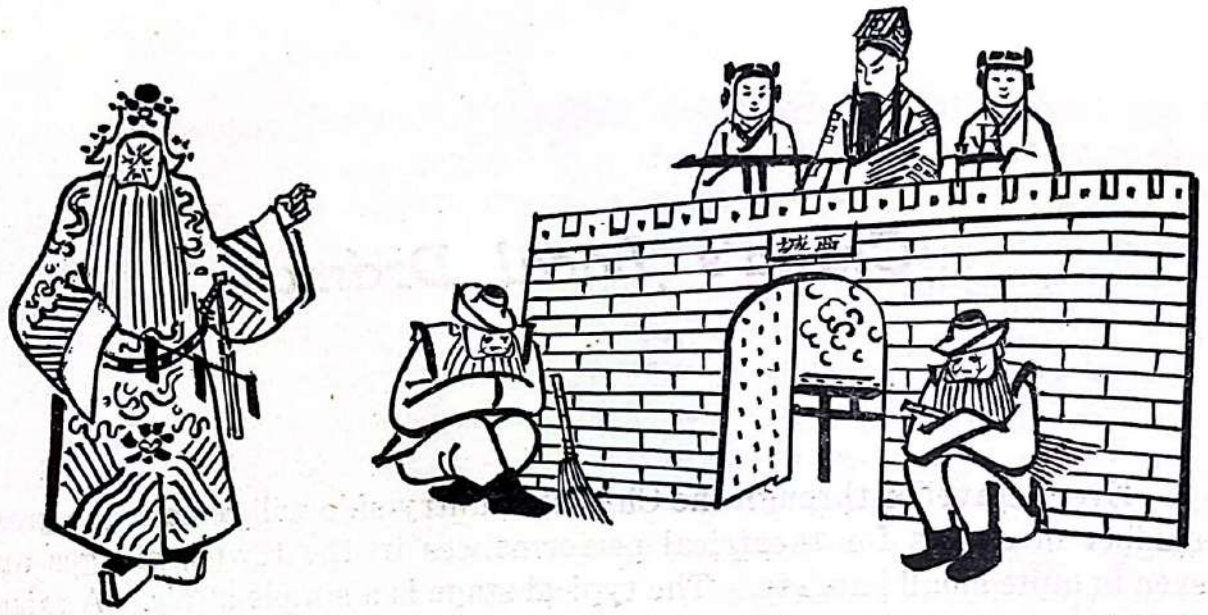
China's Local Dramas

Every traveller through the Chinese country-side will remark the great number of stages for theatrical performances in the towns, villages and even in quite small hamlets. The typical stage is a simple affair. A raised platform open on three sides with a back wall containing two doors; small dressing rooms backstage, a roof over the stage supported by two pillars; an open space in front. Sometimes there is a balcony over the stage as in the Elizabethan theatre of old England. The auditorium is open to the sky.

Today as in the past, these stages are used for theatrical performances, and also as community meeting places. Theatrical performances have always played a considerable part in Chinese community life. Every year on big social occasions, after the harvests or at the new year and other festival times, the villagers gather either at their theatre place or at some other custom-hallowed spot. With the backdrop of the trees or the mountains, with the fragrance of the earth and growing things about them, they enjoy the drama. It is thus that the local dramatic arts of China have been born.

What are the subjects of these dramas? Tales of deathless heroes of the past, defenders of the people; of the fidelity of wives or husbands, of the steadfastness and filial piety of sons or daughters. Simple tales of love, comedies, tragedies, folk tales and legends, played by the peasants themselves or by local players, artists of the people, who intimately know the peasants' sentiments and needs.

It is out of these folk dramas that all the contemporary forms of classical dramatic art in China have emerged. *Ching hsi* (Peking Opera) itself developed out of a synthesis of local dramas. It came from a merging of the *kun chu* style of drama from Kunshan in East China and North China folk theatre at the beginning of the 19th century. With the picked actors, poets, artists, musicians and costumers congregated at the Manchu court it quickly blossomed into the leading style of classical theatre. Today of course, with its rich repertoire and most versatile means of expression, it is in a class by itself. But it is surrounded by almost 100 types of local drama in the various provinces, each with its own distinct characteristics.



Chuko Liang sits on the city wall and taunts the attacking general. A scene from a Szechuan Opera production of "The Empty City," a dramatization of an incident from "The Three Kingdoms," the famous novel written in the Ming Dynasty

The 1952 National Drama Festival in Peking gave an unrivalled opportunity to study these many theatrical forms. They are, of course, not all equally well developed. Some already present full-scale dramatic performances with an extensive repertoire, others are still at the stage of folk drama, others again are in the form of folk festival performances, dance drama or the smaller dramatic forms.

There was shown the *hua ku* (Flower Drum) theatre, rich in the folk melody and sentiment of Kiangsi and Hunan Provinces, the *chin chiang* dear to the heart of China's Northwest provinces, healthy, simple and ingenuous; the Hopei *pang tse,* a form of dramatic balladry introduced into North China from the Northwest. Szechuan Opera showed that it retains a great wealth of the dramatic heritage left by the theatre of the Yuan dynasty, and there is a special flavour to Szechuan humour, dancing, music and singing that marks it off distinctly from all others. Its productions of incidents from the great historical novel *The Three Kingdoms,* with which the province is so closely associated, are naturally of particular interest. Then there were the theatres from Canton, the Han River area, from Shansi and Kweichow, the *ping chu* and Shaohsing Opera all of which have their special features and charms.

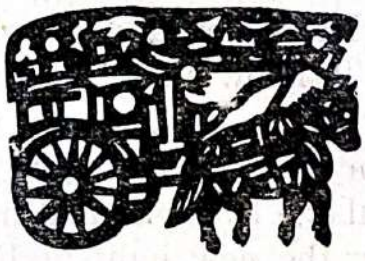
Today some of these dramatic forms continue to develop, as it were, on their own levels. Others like the *ping chu* theatre have already developed out of the simpler dramatic forms and are now merging and developing into more complex forms just as, at an earlier date, the Peking or Shaohsing Opera developed out of simpler dramatic forms. The people's art is like

a fertile loam of creation out of which new shoots of theatrical art are constantly sprouting.

Today the People's Government has a slogan "Let the new emerge from the old. Let all flowers bloom together." This is the guiding principle of policy with regard to the local dramas. Each is being assisted to the utmost in developing its special characteristics, to absorb experience from other dramatic forms, to revitalize itself at the springs of the people's creative wisdom, re-assessing itself in the light of the leading thought of modern China—the teachings of Mao Tse-tung, of the Chinese working class, so that each can bring its utmost use and beauty to the people.

This process of critical assessment and renaissance has been taking place throughout the theatrical life of the country. The National Drama Festival was to bring together the best representatives of all the local dramas for a general review. This was extremely necessary to see what is the state of the art as it stands before magnificent perspectives of further development. It was a sort of preliminary inventory to see what could be preserved and what should be discarded.

The Festival showed that all of these many styles of drama are now enjoying a new brilliant renaissance inspired by the liberation. This, in fact, is one of the most remarkable aspects of the Chinese theatre today—a vivid expression of the extraordinary vitality and youth of China's 5,000 years old culture and her people.



"Little Son-in-law"

A Ping Chu Play

Silvering the spring twilight, the crescent moon rises over a remote village soon after liberation. Tien Chi, a young model farmer, declares his love for Chuan Tsao. But their road to happiness is not to be an easy one.

Chuan Tsao's old peasant father is shocked by the new ways of women. When he learns that his daughter has a sweetheart, he is alarmed and angry. As he sees it, such goings on not only tarnish his good reputation, but are an insult to his ancestors. To save the situation, he decides to betroth his daughter immediately in the old-fashioned way. He accepts the offer of a widow from a neighbouring village who wants a bride for her 11-year-old son and is ready to pay 20 piculs of grain as dowry. The wedding is arranged for the very next day.

When poor Chuan Tsao discovers this plot, she begs her parents to let her marry the man she loves. Her mother weeps but tells her: "All my life, I have never heard of a girl choosing her own husband!" Her father is adamant. "Tradition demands...!"

Chuan Tsao, at her wits' end, turns to her beloved for help. But when Tien Chi and Chuan Tsao ask the village head to settle the matter, much to their surprise, the latter, new and inexperienced, merely scratches his head and mumbles: "I know your father is feudal-minded. Yet, your way seems too new...." Thrown on their own resources, the young couple decide to run away at midnight.

Chuan Tsao, a little village lass who had never once gone far out of sight of home, inspired by the new light of life, calmly and heroically walks out of the homestead gate. But the watch dog's barking betrays her. She is caught and forcibly put into the bridal sedan chair and taken to her "husband." But she determines to continue the fight for her freedom.

Three days later, according to tradition, the newly married pair go home to see the bride's parents. The mother is filled with remorse when she sees her daughter's grief and the ignorance of her little son-in-law. The father, though unwilling to admit his mistake, feels conscience-

stricken. At a secret meeting, Tien Chi persuades Chuan Tsao to defy her father, take the whole affair to the People's Court and get a divorce.

At this moment, the village head comes back from the district office. He apologizes and criticizes himself for not having been able to settle the matter in time, but he has brought back with him the most exciting news: on that day, May 1st, 1950, the Central People's Government has proclaimed the new *Marriage Law*. There it says in black and white: No one shall interfere with the right to freedom of choice in marriage. There is a happy ending: Chuan Tsao is divorced from her little husband and marries the man she loves.

This simple, realistic story, performed in the *ping chu* style as a dramatic narrative to music, was seen by more than 300,000 enthusiastic people in Peking within two months of its first performance.

Since the latter part of the Manchu dynasty, which was overthrown by the 1911 Revolution, peasants of Shantung Province have enlivened their leisure by singing old familiar folk tales to the beat of bamboo castanets. Only two persons sang and acted to each other at first, each impersonating several characters. These were called *Lien Hua Lao,* the Lotus Tales, and were loved by the peasants, growing constantly in popularity and spreading in both North and Northeast China. Both stories and music were enriched by local colour. Later, the *Lien Hua Lao* travelled from village to village, and gradually developed two main forms: the "East Road" and the "West Road." The former was popular in the Northeast, whither many Shantung peasants had migrated. The beats are fast; the tones strong, and the whole composition is cast in a sturdy, vigorous atmosphere. The "West Road," on the contrary, is soft and slow like the spring sun shining over the North China plain. But in both cases the playlets developed gradually from duets to spectacles with several performers.

About 50 years ago, *Lien Hua Lao* was brought by its devotees into the cities, but here it met its first setback. Old theatre-goers, particularly in Peking, jealous of the pre-eminence of Peking Opera, decried it as "provincial." The conservative critics treated it harshly. Under the Kuomintang regime, *ping chu* was attacked still more severely by the reactionary critics, who feared the way it dared to deal with current problems. But it had its staunch supporters among the people. The *Lien Hua Lao* actors therefore were not depressed. They accepted and were proud of the name *ping chu,* which is taken by many to mean the "play that is criticized," and determined to make it the "play that is praised." And they succeeded. For *ping chu* is a true people's art. The stories, the

language, the atmosphere, all come from the hearts of the labouring people.

Ping chu is one of the liveliest forms of theatre in China today. It is still developing boisterously like some lusty country boy. And this fact, that its forms are not yet congealed by tradition, gives it great adaptability. It deals in vivid, straight-hitting realistic style with the most topical themes of New China—the marriage question, old-fashioned parents and modern children; new, co-operative ways of doing things.... It has an earthy humour. The whole ridiculous nature of the situation is brought out in the end of the third scene of *Little Son-in-law* —when the little "bridegroom" yells "Mummy, I've wet my bed!"

Some of the troupes have branched out to more ambitious dramas—an adaptation of the *White-haired Girl* or a new version of the old, well-loved folk tale: *The Weaving Girl and the Cowherd,* the story of the little goddess of the skies who falls in love with a simple labouring earthling and who thus brings down on herself the wrath of the feudal-minded Queen of Heaven.

After liberation, *ping chu,* like all the other forms of people's art, received new attention. The Department of Literature and Art of the Peking Municipal People's Government at its training class for theatre workers helped the *ping chu* actors to enrich their art and develop its content and forms into closer harmony with the needs of today. New *ping chu* plays were created. Li Fang-ling, an experienced actor and director, produced a stage version of Lu Hsun's famous tragedy of a widow in the old society, the story *Sister-in-law Hsianglin,* in *ping chu* form. It was enthusiastically received.

Ping chu came of age in New China. Now there are several regular *ping chu* troupes in Peking and many more in other North China cities and in the Northeast.

Tsao Ke-ying was a veteran actor in the old society. In 1947, he joined the revolutionary movement. He and his troupe went to the country-side to aid propaganda work there. They gathered dramatic material from the peasants and performed for them. *Little Son-in-law* was one of the new folk tales they heard from their village friends. And when Tsao Ke-ying put it on the stage, the peasants found it not only a pleasure but also a lesson, for it made the issues of the struggle between old and new still more vivid to them.

Little Son-in-law has now been performed in every big city of China. It was specially featured during the campaign in March 1953, to publicize the full and proper implementation of the *Marriage Law.*

Shaohsing Opera

One of the finest performances at the 1952 National Drama Festival in Peking was given by the Shaohsing Opera Troupe from Chekiang Province, East China.

Shaohsing Opera originated in that area as a type of peasant folk ballad and folk song many decades ago. In the early part of the century it had already developed as a form of opera drama and in 1916 itinerant players brought it to the Shanghai stage. In that metropolis its music was enriched and elements of the Peking Opera, the Kunshan Opera and other local dramatic forms were combined with its original elements.

Today, as Peking saw it at the Festival, it is a colourful and very finely conceived professional theatre with distinguishing features that mark it off sharply from all other local dramatic forms.

All roles are played by women. This gives a certain ethereal softness to its whole atmosphere. The performance of *Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai* was typical. This is a beautiful folk tale of a girl, Chu Ying-tai, who disguises herself as a boy. She goes to school and for three years she is the schoolmate of Liang Shan-po. She falls in love with him. Then she is recalled home. Only when she has gone does Liang Shan-po discover the truth—that she is a girl. It then dawns on him that he is really in love with her. He hurries to Chu Ying-tai's home to ask her hand in marriage. But it is too late. Her avaricious father has betrothed her to a rich tyrant's son. Chu Ying-tai has been warned that Liang's life will be in danger if she fails to go through with the marriage, so, hoping to save his life, she tells Liang to go away. Liang however is heart-broken and dies of grief. Chu Ying-tai is forced to go to her wedding. On her way she passes the grave of her lover. A sudden storm rises. Lightning splits the tomb asunder and she leaps into it before it closes again. As the sun breaks through the clouds, two resplendent butterflies emerge from the tomb and dance together among the flowers.

Peking Opera is traditionally played by men even to the female characters. Peking Opera has no sets or scenery. It is one of the most conventional or "theatrical" theatres in the world. The stage is quite bare except for a curtain backdrop and tables and chairs which are made

Liang Shan-po accompanies Chu Ying-tai on her way home.
A scene from the Shaohsing Opera, "The Butterfly Lovers"

to serve many purposes as stage props. Various flags and symbolic objects are used to indicate settings or actions. A whisk of horse-hair denotes a spirit. A whip—a horse. Two flags with wheels on them—a chariot. Traditional, well-known gestures indicate the opening or closing of doors, riding a horse or entering a room. A letter is written on non-existent paper with an imaginary pen. Shaohsing Opera as seen in the Festival productions, stands somewhere midway between the "conventional" theatre such as the Peking Opera and the modern "realistic" theatre. While its sets are three dimensional and illusionistic there is a slightly theatrical exaggeration about them. Skies are the bluest of blue; the perspectives extremely deep. The costumes, on the other hand, are symbolic or conventional and not realistic. Beggars are not clothed as brilliantly as mandarins, but they are not clothed in real rags either. They are dressed in silks, but, as in the Peking Opera, artistically distributed patches and colours indicate the ragged nature of their garments.

The make-up in the Peking Opera is in certain character types very conventional, though in others, such as young heroes or minor women servants, it is almost natural. For seasoned generals and emperors it is in fact so heavy as almost to form a "mask" making natural facial expression almost impossible. But in the Shaohsing Opera, all make-up is "natural." It shows off the fine features of the women of Shaohsing who are noted for their beauty. Though the acting is also "natural," it partakes strongly of the conventions of the Peking Opera. In *Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai,* a long journey of many miles is pantomimed

by merely walking several times round the stage. The action of crossing a brook, however, is done in very realistic pantomime. All this creates an impression of great poetic lyricism.

These many diverse elements, however, are skilfully combined into an artistic whole. The whole performance is characterized by its perfect taste and richness of presentation. The lyrical atmosphere is fully sustained by the music which is based on the flute.

It was all very new to Peking audiences. Shaohsing Opera troupes had never dared to risk a tour of Peking before the liberation. Peking aesthetes of the old days disparaged it in the past as a sort of hybrid product, a wayward foster-daughter of the classical Peking Opera. Today the attitude of public and critics is very different. Peking, capital of the People's Republic, applauded the shows of the Shaohsing Opera with a feeling of real appreciation for the beauty of its performances and for the fact that this was the original creation of talented local artists skilfully utilizing the treasures of China's cultural heritage.

Scissor-cuts and Knife-cuts

In the houses of the people in North and Northwest China, the white paper-covered windows are often gaily decorated with red-paper scissor-cuts that are bright splashes of colour by day and at night turn the window frames into silhouette screens. These scissor-cut designs depict the most familiar things of the people's life: flowers, birds, insects, vegetables, animals, human figures. Many of them illustrate incidents or personages from well-known stories. Sometimes called "window designs," they are usually four or five inches square.

The Lu Hsun Art Academy in Yenan was the first to draw nation-wide attention to the beauty and skill of this form of art in 1940. The poet Ai Ching, who is also an art critic, was one of the professors who built up a rich collection of these scissor-cuts during his extensive travels through the Northwest.

"We saw," the poet writes in his preface to the collection of scissor-cuts published by the Academy, "several window designs in the house of Chang Chih, a pasture owner of Hushanpo, Yuanchih County. They were extremely simple and extremely beautiful. The housewife was delighted to hear us praising these designs and told us that they were the handiwork of her young daughter-in-law, who had just joined the family. Her daughter-in-law happened to be away, but the old lady brought out some more of her work. I got as gifts eight scissor-cuts: a goat, a pig, a fish among lotus flowers, a cabbage, a weaver, and three others, all wonderful designs."

"...In Yao's family in Chingpien the big windows have designs in each of the corners and a big one in the middle. Middle-aged Mrs. Yao creates her own designs. She is famous for her skill in this art and all the women in the neighbourhood come to ask for samples of her work. The figures she cuts have very accurate contours and the decorations look perfect."

Like embroideries and folk-weaves, the scissor-cuts are made by the women members of the peasant households. After the autumn harvest, when the women-folk have more leisure, they cut out these designs. These

are used to decorate the house at the Lunar New Year Festival and in the old days were supposed to bring it happiness.

Great dexterity is needed to make these cuts, as even the smallest lines must be connected up. That is why many cuts look rough and simple, like some folk songs. But some scissor-cuts have the most intricate designs.

The Chinese peasants love beautiful designs and they produce these delightful works of art with just a pair of scissors and a piece of paper. With these "art materials" the girls and women reflect the rural life nearest and dearest to them.

These scissor-cuts are the very stuff of the life of China's villages. Of course, like the rest of China's ancient arts, they too have been influenced by superstitious beliefs. But compared with the rest of the folk arts, these scissor-cuts are outstandingly endowed with healthy, robust feeling and great simplicity. The decadence of China's old-style *literati* or of the so-called "modernists" has not touched them. They project the intense impressions that Chinese peasants have received from the objects and incidents of life. In simplified forms they preserve the characteristics of these objects—a necessary condition of all realistic folk arts.

Ku Yuan, one of liberated China's most talented artists, is one of the many members of the Lu Hsun Art Academy who tried their hands at scissor-cuts. His *Year of Rural Life* in 24 window designs is now well known. His *Co-op* is a famous large-scale design. It shows the front of a shop: a salesman holds aloft a scale, a woman holds a width of cotton in her arms while a man carries a towel and a spade on his shoulder. Hsia Feng, Chen Shu-liang and many other artists also created new scissor-cuts which delighted the peasants. Several artists produced patterns based on modern themes from which the peasant women cut designs; the results of this collaboration have been most attractive. The people are living a new life and they demand a new content and new forms even in their scissor-cut window designs. Chang Kuang-yu, now a professor of the Peking Central Institute of Fine Arts, is another artist who has enriched this old folk art with new inventions of form and new content.

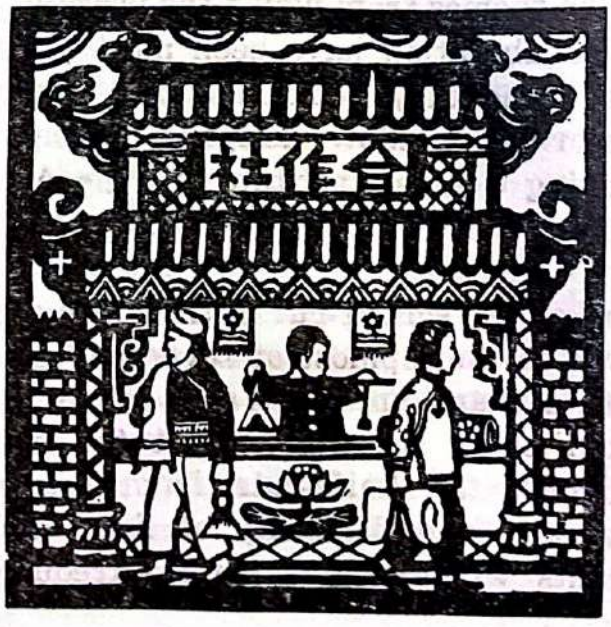
A close relation of the scissor-cut is the knife-cut. In this case the design is first drawn on the topmost of several layers of thin paper and is then cut out with a sharp knife. Water colour is floated on the top sheet and the colour seeps through to tint the whole pile. One can immediately distinguish the knife-cuts from the scissor-cuts by the former's greater variety and flexibility of line. These knife-cuts also appear on the peasants' windows and they are frequently used as designs

on women's shoes, children's caps, men's tobacco pouches and on cushions, pillows, table cloths and so on. They too have gained urban popularity since the Chahar Federation of Literary and Art Circles published a collection of them in 1950.

Today the press of New China makes great use of this people's art to decorate its pages. Fine designs are now being used to decorate lanterns and pottery. Many are prized collectors' items. They are sold in the city markets and fairs as patterns for embroideries on many household objects. Clubs and workers' palaces are using the technique of scissor and knife-cuts to make festival decorations and wall-newspaper designs.

The variety of treatment and subject matter has been immensely broadened. While in the past they were usually cut in black or red paper, today they are often cut in white and hand-painted in the most brilliant designs. Various provinces and areas have their own characteristic ways of cutting, as well as their own characteristic colour harmonies.

Rural motifs still predominate with the old themes and objects and now also the new—tractors, mutual-aid teams, co-operatives and new farm tools. But since the peasants, and particularly peasant cultural workers, have been making more extensive trips to the cities and factories under the auspices of the people's governments and workers' organizations, new themes have appeared—themes of the workers' life and work. This has introduced a new path of development for the scissor and knife-cut art. It has brought new subjects filled with new meaning to the peasant homes. It has forged yet a new link in the alliance and friendship between the Chinese working class and peasants—the foundation of the national unity of China today.



Ballad Singers of Kwangsi

China's country-side is rich in songs, particularly ballads with or without musical accompaniment. Kwangsi, perhaps, is outstanding in this, but practically every province has its own characteristic art. Today, however, they have a new trait in common—everywhere new ballads sing the new themes of contemporary revolutionary life.

Our Kwangsi peasants love to sing, and the ballad is their favourite song form. Ballad singing is indeed an inseparable part of their daily life.

In north Kwangsi among the mountain villages of Liucheng County, for example, each village retains a rich cultural heritage of centuries-old tradition. Each has its own ballad singers. They compose impromptu verses on all festive occasions or whenever a particular scene or event stirs their imagination. The villagers listen eagerly to these ballads. In the slack farming season, engrossed in the singing, they sometimes stay up late into the night until the first rooster calls the dawn.

Ballads have played an important role in all the peasant movements. With the liberation, as elsewhere, new ballads filled with a new political content have been composed; the old style ballads are now rarely heard. There is singing at every mass meeting. As naturally as other people speak, the peasants of Kwangsi express their political thoughts and the emotions they evoke in song.

Such singing evenings leave an unforgettable impression on a listener. Through the long, slow moving night, around a merrily crackling fire, the peasants sit warming themselves and talking. Suddenly one will raise his voice in song, singing of the land reform, the campaign for bumper crops or the exploits of the Chinese People's Volunteers on the Korean front.

Once the delegates of the farmhands and poor peasants held a meeting at the school house—a former temple in the Mountain Throat *hsiang*. Red flags waved gaily in the breeze. Dance troupes who had come with their delegates, performed the *yangko*. Then two peasant women, the best ballad singers of the locality, sang about the hopes the peasants placed in their delegates. With miraculous facility and aptness they

composed their words and melody as they went along. It started to drizzle, but the audience would not disperse. A rainbow stood in the sky like a gala archway.

Ballad singer Huang San-ti is known to every one of the 150,000 peasants in Liucheng County. No one uses his real name any more. He is known simply as *Shanko*—"Ballad." No guest is more welcome, or invited more pressingly to stay "just one night more." He has been singing now for 21 years and made his start when he was only 18. Before liberation his ballads were the strange romances handed down from of old, of gods and goddesses, emperors and their favourites, but also of the people's heroes. Now he has adapted his art to modern themes. Tell him the story of a labour model or hero of the People's Army once and he can immediately compose a ballad on it without missing a single detail. Once the county cultural centre gave a lantern show of coloured slides. They were about new farming methods and were made by the young artist attached to the centre. "Ballad" was told the story beforehand and as each slide was shown, he sang along with it giving apt comments and explanations. He has a remarkably quick grasp of things and a rich imagination. His emotional reactions are closely attuned to those of the peasants. It was an effective performance. Once he had a contest with another well-known ballad singer. It lasted several nights, and "Ballad" was the victor.

In September 1951, the Communist Party county committee called a delegate conference on propaganda work in preparation for the land reform. A ballad propaganda team was formed, with Huang San-ti and others as leaders and a few cadres to guide them on policy. They studied the land reform policy and composed ballads on how some of the landlords amassed their ill-gotten wealth and the "seventeen tricks" used by them to resist the land reform. Then they set out for the villages. In three months, composing fresh material on the way, they toured every village in the area. In Lohsia District they sang for six nights to audiences totalling more than 2,500 peasants. In Kenghsiang County, hundreds came to hear them sing despite the driving rain and gusty winds. Their ballads, said the peasants, helped everyone to understand the policy better and hate the landlord system the more.

In Lungta Village, Huang San-ti sang about the crimes of the local landlord despot. "Every word is true!" cried the peasants. Another singer told how his brother had been killed by a landlord and how he himself had slaved for ten years as his serf. Singer and audience were moved to tears. "A hundred hours of straight propaganda work can't compare with two hours of your singing," said the cadres who were helping the land reform in that district.

From north to south of the country, countless ballad singers have appeared. They sing of the great campaigns of the masses under the leadership of the Communist Party. They call the peasants to the spring sowing and the harvest; they lead the processions bringing in public grain. They rally the peasants to mutual-aid teams and co-operatives. The people call these people's artists: "policy singers."

Is it any wonder? Feudalism has been swept from our land, and, together with it, the weeping years. A mass choir of strong and healthy voices sings the people's hopes and plans and the victories of the revolution.

Many of the ballads of the peasants have now been recorded and published to the delight of city folk. By this means, the songs of the various localities are being spread throughout the land, enriching and developing each other.

Why They Love "The White-haired Girl"

The legend of the White-haired Girl started about 1938 somewhere in the liberated area of northwest Hopei. Peasants said that although a certain village had been freed by the Eighth Route Army, the work of emancipation made slow progress there. It was difficult to get the villagers to change their old ways because not only they, but many of the village cadres themselves, believed in the existence of a white-haired spirit. Twice a month they placed sacrificial cakes for her in a temple.

On one occasion, the whole village went to the temple instead of coming to a meeting set for that same day. A visiting district cadre determined to sift the mystery. Watching in the temple that night he and a comrade surprised and pursued the "spirit." When they ran her to earth in a cave, they found not a spirit but a sobbing, grey-haired girl. She told them her story—the story of *The White-haired Girl.*

Her name was Hsi-erh. She had lived poorly but happily with her father in a neighbouring village. She loved and was in turn loved by a young peasant. Then misfortune struck. The local landlord took a fancy to her and determined to possess her. In the depth of winter he called on her father to settle his debts. Her father was unable to pay and went to beg for time. The landlord, however, was adamant and in lieu of the money forced her father to put his sign to a deed selling Hsi-erh to him. Stricken by remorse the old man killed himself. Hsi-erh was dragged off by the landlord's bullies to his house. Her lover tried to rescue her but was almost caught and had to flee the village. Hsi-erh resisted the landlord's temptations but was finally ruthlessly raped.

When she heard of the landlord's plot to kill her so as to clear the way for his marriage to another woman, Hsi-erh escaped and fled to the hills. Her shoe found by the side of the river made it appear that she had been drowned.

In the mountains she gave birth to a baby and for months existed on wild fruits and what offerings the peasants left in the temple. Her sorrow and privations had turned her hair white but her spirit was unbroken. She it was who appeared to the peasants as the spirit of the White-haired Girl.

Did Hsi-erh actually exist? No one knows. But she is as real as all true legends are. Nobody knows who first told the tale. But it was told and retold, added to and embellished. It spread through all the liberated areas, shaping itself in the meantime. Literary workers in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei Border Region turned it into stories and poems. No one could hear this story and remain unmoved.

In 1944 it reached Yenan. The Lu Hsun Art Academy workers remoulded it, building it into a finer dramatic unity. The district cadre who saves Hsi-erh, for instance, becomes the youth who loved her and then joined the People's Army after being forced to flee from the landlord's gunmen. The climax, which the folk tale lacked, was composed around the final "accusation meeting" with its vigorous chorale. Here the White-haired Girl comes to denounce the crimes of the landlord and so leads the peasants to give their whole-hearted support to the people's liberation forces in wiping out the rural tyrants. The central theme is brought out in bold relief. As one of the choruses puts it: "The old society turned men into devils, the new society turns devils into men!"

The stage version of the story was developed into an opera with music based on popular folk ballads. First performed at Yenan in April 1944, *The White-haired Girl* was an immediate success. Guided by the people, the producers made further improvements. In later productions the action has been more closely knit (it still runs for nearly four hours) and the music is now fully orchestrated. But this constant process of artistic refinement has been profoundly motivated. It has enriched the original folk tale, made it acceptable to the demands of urban performance but without sacrificing its great simplicity so completely typical of the people's art. This is true too of the film version.

It is characteristic that people go again and again to see both opera and film. The songs and music are today among the best known in China. At the play, the audience listens in rapt attention. By the time the climax comes they form an inseparable part of the accusation meeting, completely identified with Hsi-erh in her denunciation of the landlord tyrant. At the cinema, the whole hall murmurs as the public—most of whom have already seen the play or know the story intimately through books or radio—follow each episode with a keen sense of participation. They weep at Hsi-erh's sorrows.

What is the secret of this popularity? The answer undoubtedly is that this play is so eminently a product of the Chinese people themselves. It is a collective work of the people in the fullest meaning of the word. The people speak to themselves. They are the authors, the actors and audience.

There is not a single word, note or movement that is not the product of collective efforts. These songs and melodies, this tale of bitter wrongs, of pure romantic love and of goodness and justice triumphant seems to epitomize the story of centuries of feudal exploitation broken by the rising of the people. In one way or another nearly every spectator finds himself mirrored in this play. The peasants and all those having ties with the land—and they are the overwhelming majority of the people—see here the story of their own fate, their own emancipation, and they gain in social consciousness and strength.

The popularity of *The White-haired Girl* has also gone abroad. As film or play it has been enthusiastically received in Prague, Berlin and Moscow. Its authors have been honoured with a Stalin Prize. The film won a special prize at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival. Its authenticity and power overcome the barriers of language. This is a tribute to its artistry.

The film has achieved a high technical and artistic level. It has a noble simplicity of metaphor. The heart of the audience is intensely stirred, for instance, at the journey "over mountains and rivers" of the young peasant seeking the aid of the People's Army. Without descending to sentimental banalities, in such moments as when Hsi-erh cuts out her New Year pattern of kissing ducks, it expresses the guileless emotions of healthy young people. As in life, tragedy is mingled with relieving moments of humour.

This is an art that mobilizes man for action. It brings home with poignant vividness the social struggle in the village. It shows the man-made nature of idols, the power of mass solidarity in overcoming the dead weight of the past. Encouraged by *The White-haired Girl* which has been widely presented in areas preparing for land reform, peasants go with fresh determination to make an end of feudal bondage. This is a work of revolutionary art of great power because it speaks the language of the masses and makes manifest some of the deepest and strongest emotions of our times.

Peking's Puppet Shows Return

Where were the puppets of Peking? This was a question that mystified the workers of the Central Theatrical Institute, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and all the theatre lovers who came to Peking with the liberation.

Peking in the past had been famous for its puppet theatres. And they had gone. Peking theatre people, harassed by the warlords, the occupation of the Japanese invaders and the depredations and cultural obscurantism of the Kuomintang, had known that they had gone but there had never been any opportunity to investigate the matter. They could give little help but only some small clues: names, old addresses....

But they were rich in memories. There was the *Ku Li Tzu*—the "Coolie Show." A strange name? Coolies were the poorest labourers, those who used their strength in "bitter labour." This show was for them. As cheap as possible. The single player sang, acted, played the instruments and talked for the puppets. He set up the stage and took it down when the show was over, all by himself. Another name for it was *pien tan* or pole play. The actor carried his whole outfit with him on a pole over his shoulder. At one end was a blue cloth bag and at the other a round wooden box. He sounded a gong to attract his audience. When there were enough people he stuck his pole in the ground, placed a "stage" on its top and hid himself behind a blue cloth screen. At his side the wooden box disgorged all the puppets and accessories, a set of 36 dolls fixed on wooden sticks and with movable heads, mouths and limbs. These dolls could perform almost any play in the usual classical repertoire of the theatrical troupes. And their owners were literally walking encyclopaedias of theatrical lore. The *pien tan* did much to bring the great plays of China to the people.

Then there were the puppets whose bodies were worn like a glove on the hand of the puppeteer. The index finger directs the head and the thumb and the other three fingers move the two arms of the puppet. This type of puppet is much more nimble than the marionette or string-manipulated puppet. Their exaggerated gestures can be bitingly satirical. Everyone loved *The Man on a Spree* played by such a puppet, a man who

gets drunk and has a scuffle with the inn-keeper. Then there was *Wang the Little Kills a Tiger*, a particular favourite among the children. Wang the Little is a great swashbuckler. He tosses a lethal trident, kills the tiger and rescues the old man whom the tiger has swallowed. Besides the "human" puppets there was a whole gallery of supernatural beings, puppet animals: lions, tigers, dragons, snakes....

The *Ku Li Tzu* originated in Shantung Province in the two counties of Ningtsin and Wuchiao. Here the art was famously practised. Between September 15 and March 5 when there is little field work, the talented young people of the counties used to apprentice themselves to puppet masters and learn the art. After three terms they became semi-professionals. With practice they could make a full living with their art. Mostly they went on foot, travelling often for great distances across the country-side, from one end of China to another. Some of them roamed as far afield as Korea and Japan, showing their simple lively art to the peoples of those lands. Peking, the ancient capital of China, was a constant attraction to them. At one time Peking had as many as 70 itinerant puppet theatres.

Ningtsin and Wuchiao fairs were famous as gathering places for the puppet masters and their troupes. At the annual five-day fair held in September as many as hundreds of puppeteers came to show their art.

When the Japanese invaded and occupied these two counties, however, all this gaiety stopped of a sudden. Most of the puppet masters in a gesture of silent protest put away their acting dolls. But there were a few who, being cut off from their homes, continued to roam the roads. Some, caught by the Japanese in Nankou, were accused of being spies for the people's guerillas and buried alive. The site of that crime is still marked today.

When the Japanese finally left Peking after V-J Day, of all the puppeteers only Yen Tien-chen, a man of sixty years and his son Feng-wu remained. Under the Kuomintang they made a precarious living with the only trade they knew. Once when a secret agent spotted them making fun of the Chiang Kai-shek regime in a puppet show, they were arrested, held for several days and then luckily released with a warning. They avoided their old profitable stands at the great city gates, took to frequenting lanes and small squares, touring suburban villages.

Soon after liberation, in accordance with the People's Government policy of fostering all the arts of the people, the Central Theatrical Institute established its puppet theatre section. Professor Yu So-ya, an artist and a skilled puppet master himself, searched high and low in Peking for the local puppet masters. It was a disheartening search that lasted more than three months. Finally, as luck would have it, he met the elder

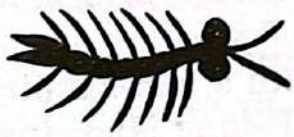
Yen quite by accident in a lane. It was not long before both the old actor and his son were engaged to work with a group of artists in the Institute and, later, in the Youth Theatre to prepare the way for a revival of Peking's puppet theatre. Soon they were joined by thirty other puppeteers from various parts of the country.

The Peking puppets emerged from boxes where they had lain for years. The State Puppet Theatre, formally established this year (1953) under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, is making a comprehensive study of the whole heritage of this interesting art. The visit and performances last year of the world famous Soviet puppet master, Sergei Obraztsov, gave a new impetus to their work. His own demonstrations and the accounts that were received of the marvellous theatre which he directs in Moscow opened new perspectives for this ancient Chinese art.

In addition to reviving and reforming the classical repertoire, the Peking puppet theatre is developing new plays dealing with modern themes. As one of its main tasks it has been given the provision of entertainment for the children. In other cities too, the puppet theatres are seeing a renaissance.

In January this year the first gala performance of the resurrected puppets of Peking took place before a crowded audience at the Youth Theatre. Veteran puppet master Yen was self-critical of his troupe's new productions but delighted at the start made with new plays of the land reform, about the heroes of the people in the struggle against American aggression, about the new life of peaceful China.

Yen Tien-chen now has nine new pupils. The puppet theatre grows apace. The 36 dolls have grown to a bigger family with puppets never before seen in the past: the model farmer, the model worker, the hero of the People's Liberation Army, international friends from other lands. The puppet animals have a new comrade—the Dove of Peace.



The People's Clubs in Peking

From the Drum Tower of the Hou Men Gate the tolling of a bronze bell announced that the Emperor had risen. The rolling of the drum informed the Middle Kingdom that the celestial monarch was asleep. For 500 years, this great building served the feudal lords of China. Today a great light shines from it. It is the People's Club now, centre of education, culture and people's entertainments.

Around Hou Men—the "back" gate of the old Tatar city—spreads one of the oldest handicraft and commercial areas of Peking. Many of the firms here trace their history for hundreds of years back. Thousands of clerks and labourers, jade and wood carvers, cloisonné and metal workers, pedicab drivers, engineers and beancurd makers earn their living within sight of its soaring roofs. From dawn to dusk, on an average, five thousand of them and their families daily pass through the Club's gate.

If you have a difficulty; if you want to know what a certain ideograph really means; if you want a letter written or read, or the policies of the People's Government explained; if you want a problem in wages solved or help in finding a house...go to the Club.

The Hou Men is only one of Peking's 20 People's Clubs. They have Information Departments there that can attend to all of these things for you. Since the promulgation of the new Marriage Law, the Departments have even taken a hand in settling not a few marital disputes. With many months' experience of their efficiency, club members and the ever-widening circle of Peking citizens that are attracted by the various club activities have implicit faith in their ability to deal with an astonishing variety of affairs.

The Clubs started out with a general directive from the Department of Literature and Art of the Peking Municipal People's Government to be of service to the people in the cultural and educational fields. Breaking entirely new ground in urban welfare work, they have made their blueprints as they went along, seeking out the people's needs and then devising ways of meeting them. Now they are in use from early morning till midnight.

During their second year (1951) over a million people attended their seven large exhibitions which, with several smaller shows of models and photographs, covered themes in science, hygiene, literature, politics, economics, industry and foreign relations. Thousands of parents-to-be and newly-weds came to the Exhibition on Mother and Child Welfare. Thousands of Peking workers, famous for their delicate handicrafts, crowded to see the models of the great Anshan Iron and Steel Plant and other industrial giants. Record numbers studied the photographic exhibitions of life in the Soviet Union. Experts in display see to it that all these exhibitions are made alive and understandable to their audience.

"Education is knocking at your door!" is one of the club slogans. The workers' spare-time schools, organized by the Clubs, now hold 84 classes in the quick method of learning Chinese characters every evening from 7-9. At the Hou Men Gate, workers in denims straight from the bench, mothers with their grocery baskets and toddlers, pedicab drivers with their cabs parked outside, sit next to each other beneath the ancient rafters.

Peking sleeps early, and wakes early. But the Club stays open until midnight when most of the capital is wrapt in slumber. This is for workers on the night shift, in restaurants, bath-houses, etc., and for street-peddlers.

Club workers, however, don't wait for pupils. They have organized hundreds of Home Study Units, with groups of three, four or more members. To a circle of housewives sewing at home, a club worker comes with a set of large characters written on cards with illustrations to make the meaning plain. What could be easier than to take a glance at these as you chat, and so learn gradually to read? Grannies come by turn to the classes and take the lessons back to their home groups. Young wives come to embroider their pillow-cases with new designs—characters traced by their own hands.

There are study groups in tea-houses near the theatres. Theatre-goers drop in for a cup of "something hot" and find a lively lesson in progress. The patrons like these informal talks. The hosts find them good for business.

From their libraries of several thousand volumes, the Clubs have organized some 25 mobile libraries with the help of trade union branches in neighbouring factories, workshops and institutions. After three months' experience with this service, the readers began publishing wall bulletins in which they exchange their reading experiences. One apprentice wrote: "In the old days, I saved for months to buy a book. Then my master burned the book and beat me to boot for 'wasting time'!"

Round the warm stoves of a winter afternoon, the children gather to hear the story-tellers tell tales of the old days of kings and rebels, modern tales of guerilla fighters, labour heroes and volunteers for Korea. The reading groups compete for the title of the best teller of stories. They act their tales. They visit the storied sites of their great and ancient city.

In the days before the liberation, there were two so-called Social Centres for the people of Peking, but their funds were hardly enough for subscriptions to the leading papers. On fine days, perhaps a score or so people would gather there for a gossip. In winter, their unheated rooms were deserted.

Now some 20 full-time club workers bear the brunt of the work in each of the 20 large Clubs with the help of activists from local trade unions and schools. Every year their equipment and services improve. Millions come to club events and classes and to take part in the various amateur art groups for singing, dancing, acting and painting. The People's Clubs have truly earned their title.

"Gate No. 6"—A Workers' Play

In *Gate No. 6,* hailed by the public and critics as the best workers' play of 1950, you see how the Chinese transport workers lived and toiled in hell and how they won their way to freedom.

This is a story of real life—but life artistically concentrated—that has taken its place on the stage. The actors have in truth "lived the part." And for this reason the audience impact has that special quality of urgency and poignancy that we saw earlier in the *River of Ice Has Thawed,* the play written and acted by the former prostitutes of Peking, in which they told how they had been freed and returned to a normal, healthy life.

The action of these 17 scenes is set in Tientsin's Eastern Goods Station. The sweated transport workers at Gate No. 6 are all in the grip of Ma, a brute of a gangmaster who pockets 90 per cent of their earnings. Ma needs lots of money. He lives in style, and bribes for the bigger Kuomintang sharks are heavy. Hu Erh, an honest and hard-working labourer, is only one of those reduced to utter destitution by the gangmaster's extortions. His mother is dying, his wife ailing, his child starving. But when he appeals to Ma for some of his wages, Ma gets him fired and blacklisted. Hu Erh, who has sold every saleable thing in the house, in desperation sells his child to buy medicine for his mother. This is sanctioned by Confucian ethics, but it breaks his wife's heart. And when he returns home with the medicine, his mother is already dead.

The tragedy stirs the smouldering anger of the workers. But when one of them, impetuous young Wu, speaks up, he is immediately denounced by the gangmaster as a Communist and is beaten to death by Ma's thugs as an example to the rest.

This savagery, however, has the opposite effect from that intended. The workers revolt. Helped by a real Communist underground worker, they organize a strike that spreads to all Tientsin transport workers. Gangmaster Ma is faced for the first time with a solid working-class unity that cannot be broken and he is forced to give way.

The play originally ended on this first victory for the workers, but there were insistent demands for the post-liberation sequel. In this way Act Two was written. Hu Erh tries to organize a free workers' transport

team. But it is not so simple. Some of the workers are still under the gangster's thumb. Hu, however, again gets the help of his Party member friend Yang; the team is organized and is a success. More workers join it. But gang boss Ma is not one to take reverses lying down. He sets out to smash the team. He blackmails its weaker members. Still believing that money can buy everything, he sends one of his henchmen to Peking with gold for bribery. When his creature returns and reports failure, Ma, enraged, immediately decides to carry out the order of the Kuomintang secret service to murder Comrade Yang. In a surprise ending, however, the workers discover and frustrate the plot, capture Ma himself and turn him over to the law.

This is the story of *Gate No. 6*—a true story. In July 1950, the transport workers of Tientsin, led by the people's authorities, were among the first to overthrow the old labour bosses and assert their rights. A vigorous movement to end the gang labour system was thus initiated throughout the transport industry. The better to pass on their experiences to others, the workers of *Gate No. 6* decided to write them down. Five professional writers assisted them. On three afternoons accusation meetings were held at which the workers described the crimes of the gangmasters. The raw material for the play took shape. In 24 afternoons of discussions they went over this material and decided what should go into the play. After each discussion, they immediately rehearsed the scene discussed. Each worker spoke his own part. In this way they recorded the very language of the workers.

This authenticity undoubtedly is the secret of the play's success. The writers are themselves identified completely with the struggles they describe. The players themselves are transport workers. They are hardly acting in the ordinary sense; they are re-enacting the tale of their own lives, expressing their own loves and hatreds.

In August 1950, the play was first presented to the public in Tientsin's Cultural Palace for Workers. Its success was immediate. The audience was extraordinarily moved. Transport workers after seeing it commented: "Not one note is false. These words are taken from our own hearts." The audience lived through every moment of the action. The death of young Wu invariably evoked cries of "Down with the labour bosses!" More than 120,000 people attended the 60 shows given in Tientsin.

What is the value of a play? It is the extent to which it helps to move forward the wheels of history, the extent to which at this moment it helps to lead the mighty work of New-Democratic revolution. *Gate No. 6* is by all counts a successful play. It has already helped thousands of workers to break their shackles. After the showing of this play, many

meetings were held to expose the remaining labour bosses. In Tangku, the gangmasters were still able for a time after liberation to oppress the transport workers there. Tientsin's workers took *Gate No. 6* to Tangku and, three days later, ten gang bosses were turned over to the police by the local workers.

In February 1951, audiences at the capital received the play with equal excitement and enthusiasm. The two 3-hour acts were shown on consecutive nights for a total of 40 performances.

Outside the Peking Theatre there was a poster announcing *Gate No. 6*. An old transport worker coming out from the play stopped for a moment in front of it. Meditatively, he read its lines and then with a stump of pencil added: "We were beasts of burden! Now we are real men!"

Amateur Night at Liuliho

There was great bustle in the trade union offices and around the factory theatre. People continuously came and went. Some, in a great hurry, carried armfuls of bright-coloured costumes or musical instruments. Others were earnestly mumbling lines to themselves. A troupe of youngsters with highly rouged cheeks and eyes sparkling with excitement stood expectant in the yard. For a moment, they turned the grey walls and smoking stacks of the Liuliho Cement Works into the backdrop for a stage.

Preparations were on for the literary and artistic contest between the various shops of the plant. The curtain would rise at seven. There would be plays, dances, songs, teams of backchat comedians and *Kuaipan* —quick-patter ballads to the beat of castanets in the Shantung Province style.

In the People's Army there is a slogan: "Soldiers act soldiers!" Here it was: "Workers act workers!" The most popular numbers in the contest showed the life of the workers as acted, sung or danced by themselves.

The packing house men, as their entry, put on a play, *Raising Production,* in which each character played himself. A dance, *Happy Cement Workers,* was composed by a group of young workers. Its climax came with the loading of the bags for the fronts of national construction. The applause was deafening. And it was well-earned. From the manipulation of the new maroon-red curtain to the verve of the dancers, there is a sureness of touch in these items that is the mark of well-trained amateur art. The audience enjoys the dramatization of the victories they have achieved; victories that only a few years ago would have seemed unbelievable.

The singer stands in his workaday clothes, flooded with limelight on the stage, singing a song of today. Hundreds of workers listen intently. Children sit quiet in their mothers' laps. Old men critical, appraising.... "Could this have been in my young days?" they think. When reality so close at hand is so wonderful, what need is there of the esoteric?

The Liuliho Cement Works is already well known to the North China press as a record-breaking production centre. Now it is making a name for itself in the arts. In the early days of liberation, meetings and festivities here were held in the workshops or in the yard under the open sky. Now the theatre is the centre of all big social and political activities. Means for its building came from the welfare fund set aside by the management, and from the trade union's educational and cultural account. The workers, however, were ambitious. They saved on the seats, which they made in their spare time out of scrap materials, and modelled the building on the excellent little Experimental Theatre in Peking.

Sure enough, there was a club house in the factory before liberation, but a worker trying to get in there would have found himself out on his ear in no time. It was strictly private for Kuomintang bureaucrats and Japanese overseers. The change came in December 1948, when the red flag was run up over the highest chimney. Steady improvements followed. The whole system of administration was changed. Liuliho became a people's state factory. The workers themselves promoted their best representatives to the factory administration committee and to other leading positions. Production increased. Social amenities were introduced; wages rose by an average 50, and in some cases, 100 per cent. The new administration understood the needs of the workers, including their cultural and recreational needs, and saw to it that they were provided for. That is how the auditorium was built and the song, dance and drama troupes grew up.

In September 1949, the drama troupe started with a handful of members. "As big as a rabbit's tail!" said one old cynic. But like so many things in New China, it grew and grew. Now it is 150 strong and has a repertoire of 70 plays, 25 of which its members wrote themselves.

The dance group is even more popular. It has to be an old worker indeed who can't rouse himself to take part in a *yangko* circle. Drums and cymbals beating, the dancers join and leave the circling group; arms swinging, brave steps forward, forward and sideways, round and round to the clapping and laughter of the onlookers. What an incongruous sight it would have been to see such dancing here in the old days! But now it's a dull day when there is no dancing in this cement works. Since June 1952, dancing has caught on. It was already in the air then when some art workers and dancers from the Central Theatrical Institute came down from Peking to learn at first hand how this factory lives, get to know the workers, and help them organize their cultural activities. Within a few weeks, 90 per cent of the workers were active members of the dance groups.

"Since I learned to dance," said Liu Yu-pu, who works in the furnace room and is turning on fifty, "I feel younger, I eat more, I sleep better and work better!"

Now the dance groups not only dance the *yangko* and other folk dances of China and the peoples abroad, but they have learned to compose their own dances as well. Some have turned out to be surprisingly apt. Yin Tung of the repair shop has worked in the plant for ten years already, although he is only twenty-four years old. In July last year, he began to learn to dance, and now he composes new dances himself. Celebrating the expansion of production at the works, he and a colleague composed the *Dance of the Hammer,* a rhythmic arrangement of work movements. Now every workshop has its dance group, and the best form the factory ensemble.

The workers make their own songs, too. *Ten Praises of Cement Workers* was written collectively. *Find Efficient Ways!* is the song of a stoker. The *Banner Bearers* is a ballad by a power-plant worker describing the characters in a working group during a production emulation campaign.

Poetry, too, is no stranger to the life of Liuliho's workers. Why should it be? It is poetry with a lift of optimism to it.

The flower in the heart of the worker blooms.
Cement! Cement! Production plans fulfilled!
Old men no longer slouch in corners, smoking aimlessly.
No more idle dreaming for the young.
Strong flow the waters of the Liuli River.
The factory chimney belches forth its smoke. Why?
There is happiness in the soul of the workers.
There is joy and laughter everywhere!

These words were written by Yu Po, a trade union organizer at the works.

Simple words? Unpolished lines? The polish will come! What is important is that they express the sincere convictions, the song in the heart of a worker of People's China.

PLATES

1. Labour heroine Chao Kuei-lan meets Chairman Mao *(New Year picture by Lin Kang)*

2. **Chairman Mao talks with the peasants** *(New Year picture by Ku Yuan)*

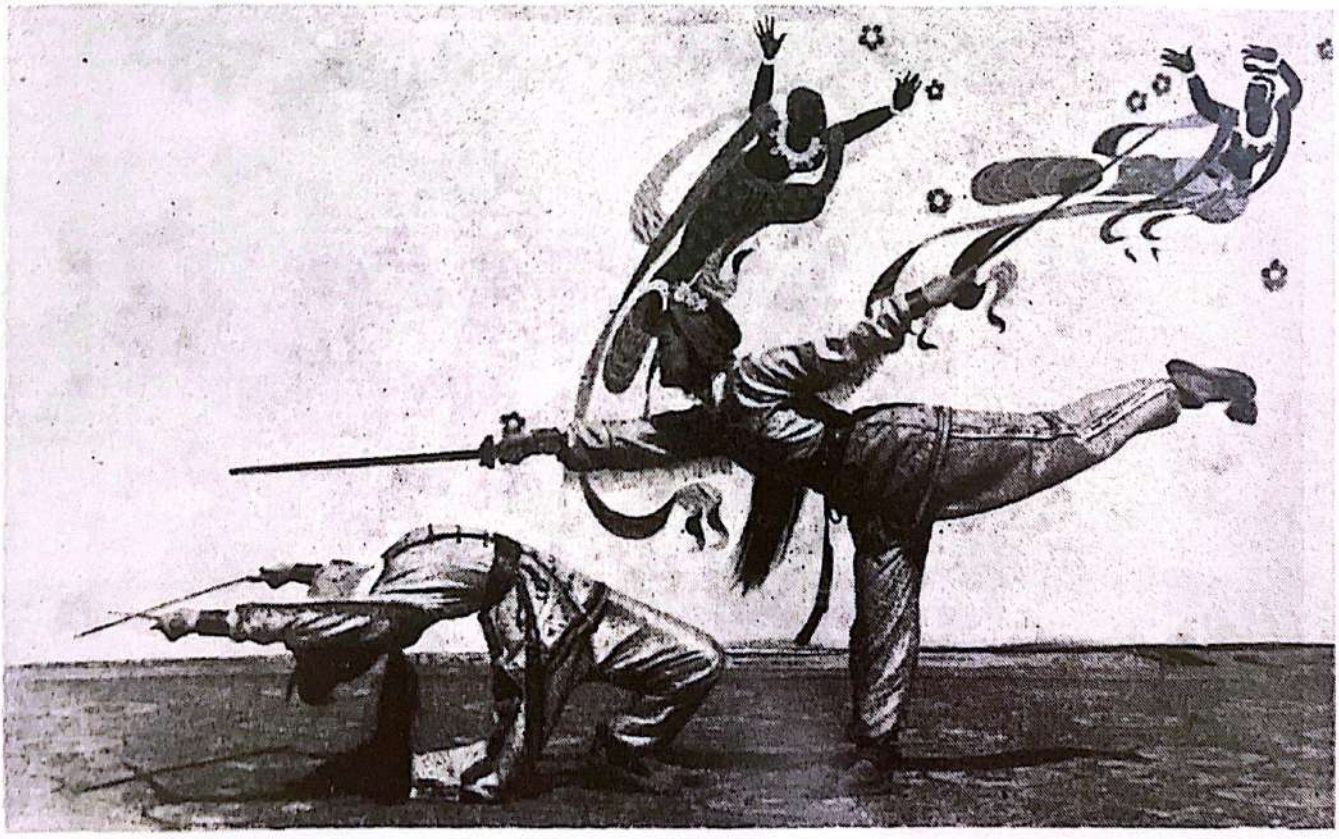
3. **Peasants sign the Stockholm Peace Appeal** *(New Year picture by Teng Shu)*

4. "Yangko" dancers on the Tien An Men Square

5. Waist-drum dancers

6. The Peace Drum played by members of the Art College of Chinese Youth

7. Classical Sword Dance performed by members of the Central Theatrical Institute



8. The Red Silk Dance performed by the Chinese Youth Ensemble →

9. Dances of the People

A Tibetan dance

Dance of the Yi people

A Mongolian dance

Dance of the Li people

The long-drum dance
of the Yao people

An Uighur dance

Hsi-erh is happy with her peasant sweetheart Ta-chun

10. The White-haired Girl

The landlord attempts to ravish her

Ta-chun—now a people's fighter—returns

Hsi-erh in her distress calls for retribution

White-haired Hsi-erh is rescued by the People's Army

"Little Son-in-law" in "ping chu" style

11. Local Drama

"Chiu Kiang" in Szechuan Opera style

"Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai" in Shaohsing Opera style

12. Two Masks from Peking Opera

Yang Chi
A heavenly guard

Monkey
Sun Wu-kung

13. Monkey Sun Wu-kung (played by Li Shao-chun) and his troops in the Peking Opera production of "Monkey Sun Wu-kung Throws Heaven into Disorder"

Mei Lan-fang as "The Drunken Beauty"

14. Scenes from Peking Opera

Two gestures from Peking Opera:
To heaven (below) and to hell (right)

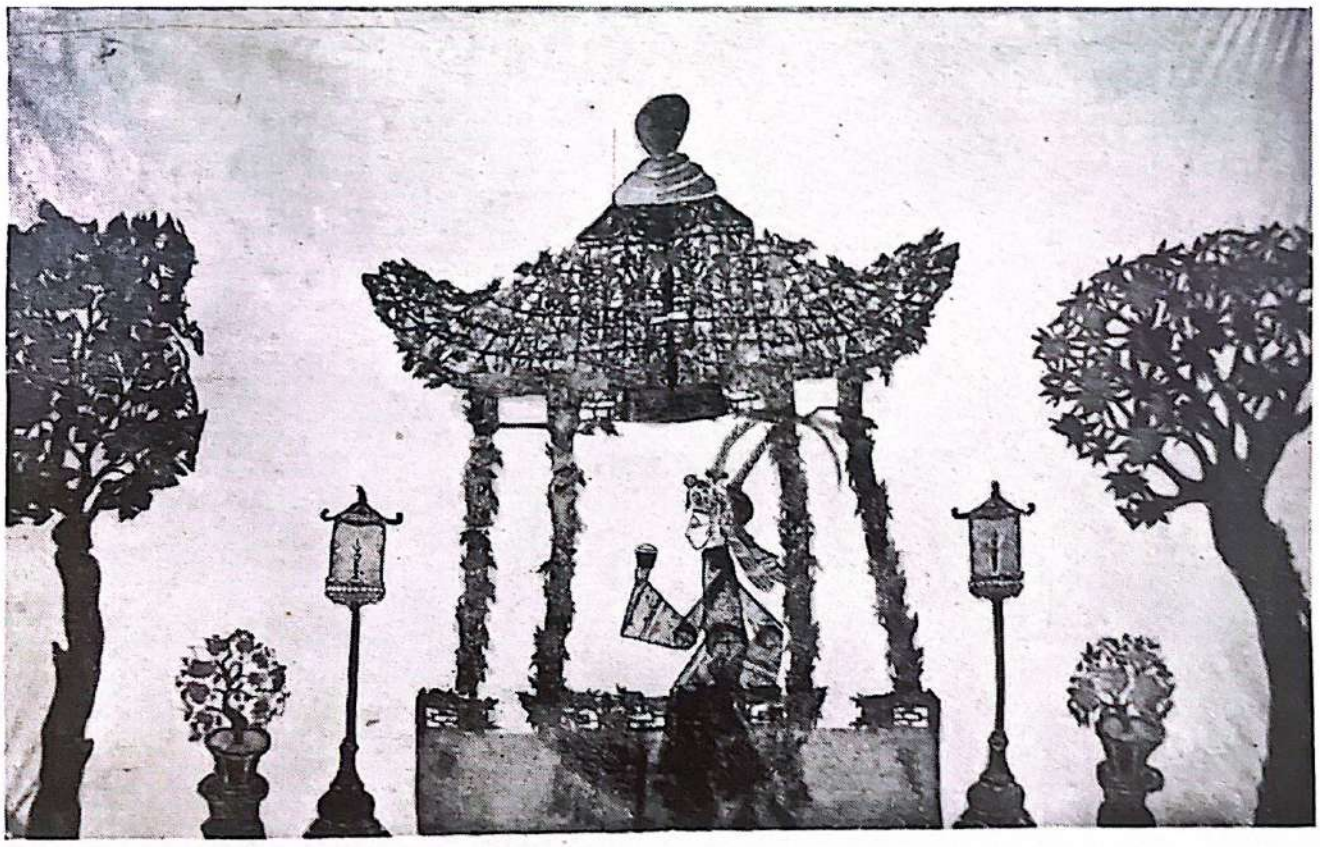
15. **The White Snake**

A shadow play figure by Liu Ching-ta

A scene from "Journey to the West"

16. Shadow Theatre

A scene from "The Fire Princess"
(or "Princess Tieh Shan")



17. Local Dramatic Art

"The Stubborn Donkey," a pantomime from Tangshan, North China

Lion Dance from Paoting, Hopei Province

Korean Dance from the Northeast

Playing the "Victory March"

A Children's Dance from Hainan Island

18. Artists of the Bridge of Heaven

19. Peking Puppet Theatre

Above: Manipulating a marionette

Top: Preparing the marionettes
Centre (left): A mother and child
Centre (right): Yueh Fei writes a letter
Bottom: A general and his groom

A fairy (left) A heavenly guard (right)

20. Hand Puppets

A puppet master dresses his "actor"

21. Six paper-cuts by Chang Kuang-yu

22. Honour to the families of the defenders of the people
(A paper-cut from Hopei Province)

ERRATA

Page 2. In last line of note, "on page 23" should read "on page 58"

Page 4. Caption 15 should read: "The White Snake," a shadow play figure by Lu Ching-ta

In Plate 12, "Yang Chi" should read: "Yang Chien"

In caption to Plate 15, "Liu Ching-ta" should read: "Lu Ching-ta"